THE

DAUGHTER OF NIGHT:

A STORY OF THE PRESENT TIME.

BY S. W. FULLOM.

Can such things be,
And overcome us, like a summer cloud,
Without our special wonder?

SHAKSPEARE

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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PREFACE.

TIME is a great wizard. He transforms all things; and Science and Literature, as well as the practical creations of Art, yield unresistingly to his spells. Even works of fiction are not exempt from their influence; and to this we owe that the modern English novel is no longer motiveless and inane. A high aim now associates itself with the vocation of the novelist, leading him to new and unexplored fields, fruitful in the noblest lessons, the mightiest interests. In comparison with these, the obsolete sentiment of bygone fiction shows itself false and puerile. What heart can be touched by it, when a world of real suffering, clad in our own garment of flesh and blood, throbs around us? when every dark alley can tell a wilder tale of sorrow, of wrong, and of endurance?

Within a few weeks one fearful trade has exacted a sacrifice of nearly a hundred lives, snatched from the world in the flush and pride of manhood, unsummoned and unprepared. In the depths of the earth, where her treasures lie like a wise man's thoughts,

secreted in unseen recesses, the hardy and intrepid miner every day finds a grave. Here there must be something radically wrong; something human ingenuity may not be able to counteract, but which, at least, should command attention. Let us dive for a moment into those gloomy underground fields, those regions of eternal night; and see their undaunted reaper at his dread husbandry. In a work claiming the companionship of light hours, it can be but a rapid glance; but, perhaps, some may rise from it with hearts enlarged, kinder, and better.

And as we pass through the noble streets of the metropolis, exulting at the opulence of its merchants, the grandeur of its public buildings, and the historic renown of its name, it were well to think of the misery and wretchedness that pine and pant in unknown back passages, accessible only through door-like courts, gaping into the main thoroughfares for breath. Where is the political Hercules who will undertake to cleanse such Augean stables? Where is the Appian conduit that will pour a healing and purifying stream through their reeking cellars?

Long observation of the moral and social condition of the poorer classes has convinced

me that it is not by measures of physical amelioration alone, be they ever so comprehensive, that the State can afford them effectual and permanent succour. It is necessary not only to ameliorate, but to elevate—not only to relieve, but to instruct. The mind recoils from the contemplation of that mass of dense and stolid ignorance, which lies, in all its awful breadth and nakedness, festering at our doors. And surely there is no Dives so selfish as to withhold, in the midst of his own abundance, those frugal crumbs of knowledge it so earnestly yearns to devour. Education is the kindly nurture by which its sores may be healed; its emaciated frame raised up; its strength, its moral health, restored. Then we shall no longer find that the humble children of labour live in an atmosphere poisoned by vice: nor will they be left to flounder in a Slough of Despond, having their very household words contaminated by foul associations.

A most sinister feature in connexion with the social degradation of the poor is their hostility to those who naturally should be their teachers—the Established Clergy. A truly venerable dignitary of the Church, the Dean of Sarum, considers this feeling to have

been generated by the Clergy themselves—by their culpable neglect, their worldliness, and their egregious avarice. And may it not have been fostered and strengthened by their unhappy divisions, which, even at the present crisis, when the enemy is knocking at their gates, they cannot be brought to forego, though the vast majority of their flocks were never more disposed to peaceable and religious fellowship.

But it is not in this place that I should dwell on anomalies which appear prominently and more suitably in the following pages. Here it only remains to say, that the *Times*, some three months ago, pointed to the present condition of the mining population, touched upon in these volumes, as abounding in points eminently available for the purposes of fiction. "The Daughter of Night" was then nearly completed, though, from unforeseen circumstances, the publication has been delayed; and with this introduction, I must leave her to relate her own story.

S. W. F.

London, January, 1851.

THE

DAUGHTER OF NIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

A HUNDRED fathoms deep, through rock and stone and mineral, down in the bowels of the earth, and for more than a mile from the yawning shaft, stretched the seams and arteries of a coal mine, in one of which, about three feet in height, and as many broad, huddled in a small recess, scooped in the side, was a human figure, attired in what seemed the dress of a male, though the wearer was a young girl.

The trapper—for so her vocation was named—discharged the important duty of aiding the ventilation of the mine. This process commenced, of course, at the shaft or entrance, which was divided by massive beams into two compartments, each having an inner partition, or brattice, expressly for the passage of air. These were respectively called the driving brattice and the drawing brattice; and it was through the former that the air descended, passing up the gate-road, or main passage, to the workings. The workings branched off from the gate-road, about a mile further on, through low, narrow corridors, such as that described, and which opened, at intervals, into roomy excavations called boards, where all the coal had been dug out, leaving only a pier to support the tunnel. At the entrance to each board was a trap-door, which, being kept constantly shut by the trapper, except when a train of waggons was passing through, forced

the fresh air up the intervening passage into the next excavation; and thus the ventilating draught, traversing all the workings, came round, through another series of traps, to the shaft, where it was impelled up the drawing brattice, affording room for a fresh rush through the driving.

After the lapse of some time, the trap higher up, at the other end of the passage, was pulled open, giving admittance to a train of tubs, loaded with coal, and having a safety-lamp perched on the foremost, gleaming in the darkness like a star. They were pushed on by a bandsman, whom Millicent, as he drew nigh, recognised, in the faint light, as one with whom she could claim affinity, though in a very remote degree — his mother, however, being her nearest living relation.

"Here's the last load for to-night, Milly, lass," said the bandsman, halting. "They're easin'-to up yonder, and thee won't be

a bit sorry, I doubt, when thou hears 'em holla, 'Knock off.' "

"No," replied the girl; "but will it be long first, Jack? for it's been rare-an-bad here the day—so stiflin', like. I've hardly got my breath. I don't know, ayther," she continued, more earnestly, "as ever I took on so sadly afore about bein' in the dark, but I warn't able to help it, all I could think on."

"Reason why—thou's been potterin', most loike, on that old tale of a ghost as they've got about. I don't believe as there's ony such cattle myself. I've worked in the pit, man and boy, goin' on twenty year, and I never see one."

"They say it only comes just afore a blow-up, or when the choke-damp's gatherin'."

"All stuff! If thou swallows half their yarns, they'll tell 'ee the moon's made of green cheese. There be no

ghosts here, I warrant; and if so be as they'd only keep the traps in order, and have another cuttin' for air, we shouldn't be troubled about choke-damp. They won't do that, howsomdever, till the parliament-house puts in a word, and then they'll be obligated, I take it. But here be our gang comin', and thou'll soon get off now."

As he moved on with his train, the party of labourers employed above in the furthermost working, appeared at the upper trap, pouring through the passage on their knees. Swart, massive men they were, with their bodies stripped to the waist, showing, as they dragged their huge limbs along, the broad quivering lines of every muscle. They made no pause in the headway, but with a word of greeting to Millicent, as she opened the trap, passed out, leaving her once more to solitude and darkness.

But this was only for a moment. As

the sound of their voices, which had made her feel somewhat bolder, died away, giving place to complete silence, the upper trap was again opened, admitting their doggie, or ganger, whose business it was to go through the mine on the completion of the day's work, and see all was in good order for the next morning.

"Well, lass, how go'st thee on? This be a thunderin' hot headway you be in, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"And thou loikes this surt o' work better nor bein' above, mindin' your own cookin'-pot? Another toime you won't say no to a good thing, I'se wand you—Haw! haw!"

The girl did not reply.

"I don't know what thou'd be doin' on," resumed Black Jem, after eying her a moment in silence. "There bain't a wench in the pit as wouldn't jump at such a lift, if I gie'd 'em the chance—Doll

Stukeley, for one; but they've all got so much gab in 'em, and I wants one as won't gie me tongue, loike that drab Sue did, sink her! That's whoy I pitches on you."

"They say as you sarved poor Sue so bad, you made her drowned herself," said Millicent.

"Who says so?" demanded Jem, furiously. "I should loike to hear 'em, and they wouldn't say owght about me ony more in a hurry."

Again there was no reply.

"You believes 'em!" pursued Jem, with a fierce scowl; "you believes 'em, though I hadn't no more to do with it nor a child unborn! Just say you believes 'em, will 'ee?"

"Well, I do."

An execration rose to Jem's lips, but was denied utterance, as, recollecting himself, he crunched his teeth with suppressed rage.

"Now I thinks on't," he said, "you was always hangin' on to Sue, and so you be readier to take agen I, but, stroike me dead, if I warn't downright sorry when I heerd as she'd jumped in the sluice. So thou's nowght to feck about there."

"I got no mind to feck about it, or to say 'ee ill words, if thee'd only let me be."

"Well, I wants to give 'ee one more chance. There ain't no fuss now about marryin', but you just goes up to a re-jesster, and has your name wrote down, and then you be buckled-to. So now speak out at once, and say what thou'll be at."

"I told 'ee last night, and thou knows I ain't like to alter."

"Thou'd be no woman, if 'ee didn't, for they veers about loike grasshoppers—here to-day, there to-morrow, and then t'other place. There be no use moindin' 'em; and so I tell 'ee, lass, I'll have thee home to-morrow, hook or crook."

"No, you won't," said the girl, resolutely. "No! I'll let you kill me first."

"Thou would, would 'ee?" scowled Jem, raising his hatchet, as though he would strike. "I could do it now, and chuck you into the dead-gap there, and folk be never the wiser. But I know what thee's buildin' on! I spied 'ee, when thou didn't think it, talkin' wi' young Muster Belwood on Sunday, and fancyin' thee cut it so flash. Fool! as if he'd look twoice at the loike o' thou, bad 'un as he be!"

"I don't want him to look at me, nor thou, nor ony one. Just let me be—that's all!"

"No, I won't. I'll be a plague to 'ee—a reg'lar leech, stickin' on constant. Rot 'ee! now there's hardly nobody in the pit, I've a gallus good moind to sarve 'ee wuss."

"You daren't!" said Millicent, springing up.

Whether Jem did, or did not, intend to carry out his threat, remained a secret; for at this moment his eye fell on the safety-lamp, and he perceived that the flame was edged round with blue, presenting the appearance miners call "afire," and which, as he well knew, indicated the presence of explosive gases. It became necessary, therefore, to look to personal safety; and he hesitated an instant, as if half inclined to save Millicent; but then pushed past, muttering, "No! let her foind it out."

Thus left to herself, Millicent again crouched in the recess, waiting anxiously the moment of release. The thought that she was, as Black Jem had intimated, nearly alone in the pit, united with the prevailing rumours of apparitions, and the deep, solemn, and unbroken silence, now gave redoubled force to her terrors, previously almost insupportable. Her heart beat so violently, that she actually

heard the pulsation; and her short, low cough, scarcely ever heeded before, made her start, resounding so loud and so often through the vaulted passages.

Gradually she became sensible of an oppressive closeness in the air, rendering it difficult to respire. A strange, sulphurous smell began to rise, penetrating to her chest, and exciting a feeling of nausea, intense and overpowering. What could it be?

Her instinctive apprehension that some catastrophe was at hand grew stronger—became, in fact, irrepressible. Breathless, racked with suspense, she listened for the word to leave the pit; but in vain, though assured, from the departure of all the holers, that it must be past the regular time. What was to be done? To remain longer was impossible; and she determined, at risk of dismissal, to make the best of her way to the shaft.

Opening the trap, she entered the next

passage, which, being between two exhausted boards, was so low and narrow that she was obliged to move along on her knees. It was also much darker—that is, though accustomed to see objects in the dark, and now stooping down, she could not distinguish the rails of the tramway. Added to this, the poisonous odour became more virulent, the heat and dense air more oppressive; and she was yet nearly a quarter of a mile from the gate-road, or main thoroughfare, itself a mile in length. As she moved along, a lassitude seized her limbs; an unnatural drowsiness, which she could not shake off, weighed down and closed her eyes; and she began to feel a strange, reckless indifference to anything that might happen.

By a great effort she aroused herself, recovering that precious instinct which urges the most desperate to prize and cling to life, even when it would seem to possess no value. Then, mustering all her

energy, she pushed forward, passing the several deserted workings, and through as many doors, very imprudently forsaken by their attendant trappers, while some were left open, as if abandoned in haste.

She now thought that the word, perhaps, had been called out while she was talking with Black Jem, and so had been unheeded, or possibly, in the hurry of a general alarm, she had been forgotten; and the fearful reflection occurred that she was cut off from assistance, and even if she escaped with life, would have to pass the night in the mine.

She was now in the last headway, opening into the principal passage, and from a rushing sound of water, streaming down the black walls into a drain, knew she must be near the first trap. With outstretched hands she moved on, bruising her knees on splinters of coal, spillage from the day's trains, and often grazing her head against the timber-work above, sup-

porting the mountain roof. But now the trap was reached, and, raising the click, she drew it open, when a terrific crash—a loud, roaring, tremendous thunder-clap, starting and expanding a myriad echoes, drove through the mine, shooting her headlong into the gate-road, stunned and breathless.

For a moment she lay perfectly stupified, but then sprang up, fully recollecting her situation. She had been thrown against a dead-gap, or line of deserted workings, where, the seam of coal being exhausted, the props which sustain the roof had been removed, and vast masses of earth, rock, and waste mineral, pressed by the enormous overweight, had fallen in, forming crude and fantastic heaps, with continual interstices, which realised the confusion of Chaos. She knew that these Pandorian recesses generate the baneful stythe, or choke-damp, always following close on explosions, and which, rolling

forth like a fog, carries death to the remotest nooks; and she instantly resumed her flight.

The way was so intersected by sleepers, supporting the tramroad, here, in consequence of the greater width, made to run waggons, that it might be thought impossible to proceed rapidly; but in flying for life, obstacles are little heeded. With her hands raised overhead, to beat back the foul air, now becoming more and more stifling, Millicent darted down an inclined plane, nearly dashing against a row of empty waggons at the bottom. Still advancing, she looked with straining eyes for the least trace of light, as marking the distant shaft; but all was darkness—darkness visible and tangible, such as made Pharoah succumb.

At last, a feeble streamy flickering, like a meteor, then a kind of dim light, could be faintly discerned; but it was not sufficient to reveal any object, or show even the

outlines of the passage. But Millicent, seeing the shaft so nigh, nerved herself for a last effort, though, as there were no means of leaving the mine, escape was apparently hopeless. Already, indeed, the deadly stythe was rolling by; her head swam; her breath stopped; a thousand columns of fire flashed before her eyes; and she fell to the ground senseless.

CHAPTER II.

BLACK JEM, like Millicent, in making his way out of the pit, had found the whole of the traps abandoned; but having a light, was able to move along much quicker, and overtook the missing trappers, flying in all haste to the shaft. Here half a dozen holers and bandsmen who had arrived too late for the preceding hoist, were waiting the descent of the cage, which, relieved of its load, was just entering the pit-mouth. All prepared to spring in, as soon as it touched the ground; but there was no pushing foremost, each being ready, with a feeling of abnegation prover-

bial among miners, to assist the less agile, though at risk of endangering himself. Black Jem alone stood aloof, turning every now and then a moody glance up the gate-road, as if still thinking of Millicent. But, at last, every one had entered the cage, and he jumped into the bottom tier, calling out, in a sullen, dogged tone, to pull up.

The apprehension now was, that the explosion, which all felt imminent, would occur while they were ascending, in which case the violence of the concussion must derange the tackle, and they would be inevitably dashed to pieces.

Not a word was spoken as the huge carriage climbed the terrible ascent. Some kept their gaze steadily on the pit-mouth, though the air rushing down, mingled with particles of coal-dust, almost blinded them; others closed their eyes, and even buried their heads on their knees, afraid almost to breathe. Long seemed the in-

terval, though only a few minutes, and the cage reached the top, landing its freight on the gratings. At the same moment, the explosion, so fearfully, breathlessly awaited, burst forth, shaking the ground like an earthquake, and making the massive timbers of the scaffold raised over the shaft rock like twigs.

A dead silence ensued, but it lasted only an instant, when there rose a Babel of troubled voices. All within hearing, for more than a mile round, instantly made for the spot. The Viewer and clerks rushed from the office; the engineer and his stokers, from the engine-house; and men, women, and children, haggard, horror-stricken, ignorant how much and nearly they might be affected by the catastrophe, came in troops from the pit-village. Some called for their parents or husbands; some, for their companions; some, in hurried and agitated accents, inquired for the missing.

"There's a trapper short of the number," observed Mr. Phipps, the Viewer. "It is—what d'ye call her?—the pretty delicate girl?—Rennel! Any one know where Rennel is?"

"Where's Rennel? — where's Milly Rennel?" cried a legion of tongues.

No one knew. Black Jem, who alone could tell, turned aside, afraid that his disturbed looks might attract attention.

There was a pause, terminated by a slight bustle, and two men sprang into the cage. They were Jack Rollin, and a young holer, named Whittaker.

A murmur of applause saluted them, and many pressed forward, with an earnestness very striking in such rude people, to grasp their hands, bidding them what would probably be an eternal farewell. Few, indeed, had any expectation that they would come up alive; but regarding the obligation of mutual aid on these occasions with religious reverence, no one

sought to oppose or discountenance the enterprise.

The word was given to lower, and cage and men, launched from the crowded grating, sank slowly through the dark aperture. Thus they continued to descend, though, as the choke-damp might possibly be met in their way down, in time to give an alarm, arrangements were made to draw up with speed, soon as they should call out; and every ear waited anxiously for the half-expected sound.

The two men, meanwhile, watched their own progress with surprising coolness.

"It be a long pull, goin' slow," remarked Jack Rollin. "Hadn't I best call out to clap the steam on?"

"No, no, it won't do no good, that," replied Whittaker; "for if we comes on the foul air too sudden, whether it's stythe

or not, it'll settle us smack. They be lowerin' quite fast enough."

"I can't look up, now," rejoined Jack, "the draught catches me so. Don't you smell it?"

"Yes."

They both covered their mouths and were silent.

"We be gettin' nigh, now," said Jack Rollin, at length. "I knows the old pit so famous, I can tell blindfold. And the air!—*ugh!*"

"It's pison," replied Whittaker.

The increased stench, the darkness, the rolling, icy damp, did, indeed, leave no doubt that they were approaching the bottom; and soon the cage struck, and the two men alighted. With all their precautions, the change of atmosphere, on turning to the gate-road, was so abrupt, so blasting, that it made them stagger back, as if struck by lightning; and the

Davy held up by Whittaker, in the vain expectation of piercing the impenetrable and awful darkness, instantly blued, denoting that this mass of noxious, deadly gases, was as inflammable as gunpowder.

Rollin tried to shout, in hopes that Millicent, if not yet dead, might be within hearing, and be encouraged to hurry forward; but the attempt, admitting a rush of foul air to his already oppressed lungs, was nigh being fatal, and he only escaped by springing back to the shaft. Whittaker, who had carefully muffled his mouth, was still pressing on, when, after a few rapid steps, something caused him to stumble, and stooping, he found it was a human body—a woman's. There could be no doubt it was Millicent's; and though, from her posture, her dead weight, her unmistakable stillness, the spirit seemed to have departed, he eagerly snatched her up, and bore her to the cage. Rollin, after vainly endeavouring to rally, had

crawled in just before, and was now lying helpless in the bottom, and Whittaker had but just strength to call the concerted word up the pipe, when he fell himself.

All was in readiness above, and the cage, once in motion, flew up the creaking grooves. In a few minutes it reached the grating, and a hundred eager hands hastened to receive them.

Mr. Charles Belwood, son of the proprietor of the pit, whose residence was not far distant, had just arrived, simultaneously with Mr. Thornhill, a surgeon, his father's most intimate friend. They approached the cage as the inanimate form of Millicent, raised by four stalwart men, was borne on to the pit-heap. Rollin and Whittaker, revived by the fresh air, were able, with a little assistance, to stagger out on their feet.

" I am afraid she is dead," said Mr. Thornhill, turning very pale, for he was a hasty, impetuous man, powerfully affected

by any excitement; "but let the women put her in the bath. You have the water hot, I suppose, Mr. Phipps, have you not?"

"Yes, sir; blankets and everything are laid out; but I fear it's no use."

"It's that good-looking girl, isn't it, Phipps?" asked Charles Belwood, with a slight appearance of interest, as Thornhill followed the body into the engine-house.

"She certainly is good-looking, sir, and a quiet, well-behaved girl, far too delicate for this work," replied Phipps. "I kept her employed above here as long as I could, but was obliged to send her down at last, as I found the people were talking about it."

"What a confounded bore that it has happened so!" rejoined the young gentleman. "Do her parents work for us?"

"She is an orphan, sir. Her father was killed going down the shaft, and her mother, who was always a very weakly

woman, broke a blood-vessel at the siftings, lifting a weight of coal, and died soon after. This is why I have indulged her a little."

"If you had told me this, I should have done something better for her," said Charles Belwood, who, indeed, without possessing such information, had previously determined, on grounds purely personal, to provide otherwise for the girl. "It's exceedingly vexatious—quite a scandal, really, Phipps, when she has such a claim upon us! I suppose I must wait here now, till we see how it ends. Have you got anything to show me?"

"There is a specimen from the new seam of coal, sir, if you would like to see it."

"Oh, dear, no! on no account! I abhor seams, and would not seem so unseemly as to pry into one just now, if it yielded white diamonds instead of black." And he smiled at his little wit.

"See how he's laughin'," observed Tom Sewel, a bandsman, in the crowd. "That's the way as the masters do, when we lose our lives — they come down and laughs."

"Let 'un laugh if he will," said Doll Stukeley, a well-grown trap-girl, whose face, denuded of grime and coal-dust, would have been thought far from uncomely, although marked with a sinister expression. "Whoy shouldn't him? Thou'd laugh, too, if thee had the jingo, and a bonny face loike he."

"You hold your sarce, will 'ee?"

"No, I sha'n't."

"If thou don't, I'll soon make 'ee."

"Do, Tom," said on old banksman. "Her's wanted takin' down a peg for a good bit, and if thou don't do't, some other body will. There's no bearin wi' her of late."

"I never see such a one for lookin' arter the chaps," observed a woman, with

arms a-kimbo. "Her'll be wantin' the master to take on wi' her next, but he'll have summut else to do, I suppose."

"Thou'd best moind you don't get summut yourself," muttered Doll.

"Come, thou be off," cried Tom Sewel, giving her a shove.

"You keep your mauls off, will 'ee?" said Doll, assuming a warlike attitude. "Here! Jem!"

"Well!" growled Black Jem. "What be up now?"

"Take she off, or I'll gie her a good tuzzlin'—that's all," answered the aroused Sewel.

"I'd just loike to see ony one mell on her," returned Jem. "Her don't mean nowght, though her be a bit bouncy; and while I be by, no chap shall knock her about. But thou'd best be a bit civil, wench, I tell 'ee."

The young virago muttered some reply, but thought it prudent not to push the

discussion further, and the signs of war subsided.

Soon afterwards, Mr. Thornhill came out of the engine-house, and Charles Belwood advanced to meet him.

"Well, doctor, what is it?—life or death?" he asked.

"Oh! she's alive!" answered Thornhill, loud enough for the general ear. "With proper care, she will soon get over it."

"Stash me, I be glad on't," said Black Jem, amidst a buzz of satisfaction.

"What odds do it make to thou, I should loike to know?" said Doll Stukeley to Jem. "You be always arter she, but you won't get no furder by it, I know."

"There, hold your gab, do," said Jem, turning away, with hands thrust in his pockets.

"How ever did you get such a girl into your pit, Mr. Phipps?" asked Thornhill. "Now she's well washed, she looks

a perfect little Hebe—a thought too pale, perhaps, but that's only natural, considering her accident. Pray see that she is properly nursed."

"Oh, yes, sir! I'll speak to some of the women about her."

"There is no occasion to trouble yourself," interposed Charles Belwood. "Put her in my carriage, and I will have her taken up to the house, where Helen will see her carefully attended to. I really do not like to leave the poor girl here, to the tenderness of these dirty women."

"But Mr. Phipps will select some suitable person," urged Thornhill, appearing extremely averse to the proposal.

"There's old Mrs. Rollin, sir, would very gladly do it," suggested Mr. Phipps. "She's some sort of a relation, too, I believe; for, you know, all the pit people are related."

"It doesn't matter," returned Charles Belwood; "I'll have her up to the house.

If my father were at home, he would wish it, I am sure. It will show the people we take an interest in them; so see her put in the carriage, Phipps."

The Viewer, a man of few words, said no more, but proceeded to the engine-house for the purpose of carrying out this injunction. Mr. Thornhill hesitated a moment, evidently not over pleased at the turn of affairs, pulled out his watch, looked at it in an abstracted manner, and then followed Phipps.

As Belwood, with a supercilious smile, turned to the carriage, a horseman rode up, and presented an express.

"It came down by the five o'clock train, sir," said the horseman, "and the clerk at the station sent me on with it directly."

As Belwood glanced through the letter, his countenance changed, gradually assuming a more serious look, strangely blended with satisfaction.

"We have nothing but calamities to-day," he said to Thornhill, who at this moment returned. "My father, who left us in such excellent health, has been seized with a paralytic stroke, and is in such a precarious state, that they ask me to go up to town to him."

"This is, indeed, calamitous," answered Thornhill, deeply moved. "My poor, good old friend! Pray do not lose a moment in setting off, or you may be too late. I would go to him myself, but, unfortunately, I have some patients so ill, I dare not leave them."

"I will start by the next train, which reaches our station at seven," rejoined Belwood; "so I shall just have time to give Helen charge of this poor girl, and then be off."

"Well, I will call and see her to-morrow," said Thornhill. "I am now bound in the other direction; but she can take no harm, if kept out of the cold."

Millicent, pursuant to Belwood's orders, had already been placed in the carriage, wrapped in blankets, and propped up by cushions. One of the miner's wives, selected by Mr. Phipps to attend her, sat at her side; and Belwood took his place with the coachman on the box, when the vehicle moved slowly away.

About half a mile of moor brought them to the hills, which looked down on what seemed to be a new country, so widely and completely did it differ, in every possible way, from the sterile region behind. Two miles further on was Belwood House, peeping through luxuriant trees on to the high road, though, at other points, noble vistas, opening in every direction, afforded an extensive prospect.

On arriving at the hall-door, Belwood hastily entered the mansion, leaving Millicent unnoticed; but two female servants soon appeared, and, aided by the pit-woman, carried her in. A moment afterwards, Belwood returned, and, throwing himself in the carriage, was borne off to the railway.

CHAPTER III.

Awaking from a long and heavy sleep, Millicent found herself stretched on a bed in a small chamber, which the moon, peering through an uncurtained window, showed to be furnished with marked regard to comfort. Rubbing her eyes, in the supposition that she must still be asleep, she looked round in amazement, till, collecting her ideas, a dim and confused remembrance of the explosion arose, exciting once more a sense of suffocation, scarcely less oppressive than the reality.

She closed her eyes in a paroxysm of horror, as if to shut out the hideous recollection that shook and convulsed her sore,

weary frame, and made her blood curdle. Again she seemed to hear the rush, the crash, the mighty roar of the explosion, bounding forward like a devouring fire, yet a fire without flame, enveloped in impenetrable, awful, blasting darkness, which sunk its iron breath into the very soul. Then it grew thicker and closer, wrapping round her in leaden folds, dripping with icy, putrid moisture, benumbing, deadening. Her hands struggled to throw it off; she gasped for breath; and the vivid impressions of her imagination, which had assumed so much of the real, vanished like a nightmare.

Sitting up, she ascertained that a stiffness in her limbs, and a few bruises, were her only hurts, though a feeling of weakness to which she was subject had very materially increased. Her next thought was to conjecture where she could possibly be, all the circumstances which followed her rescue from the pit, when she was at no time more than half conscious, seeming shadowy and vague. Then came the wondering question, was

any one else hurt?—had any one perished? for on these occasions, as is too well known, it is no uncommon thing for as many as thirty, or even fifty lives to be lost. There were few with whom the young girl was associated by ties of kindness, but in this rude, semi-barbarous community, such catastrophes excite sympathies deep and strong, giving a halo to familiar faces, even when they are wont to wear a scowl. Moreover, a tide of gentle and tender feeling lay in her heart, like a sealed spring, unknown, unsuspected, that rose at every call; and it was to the welfare and comfort of others, not to her own, that she was accustomed to give her first thoughts. But at last she concluded that the only way of arriving at the truth was to rise and inquire. Her clothes, patched with half the colours of the rainbow, she found, by groping about, on a chair near the bed, and after plunging her face in a basin of water, her toilet was completed.

At this moment her practised ear distin-

guished a rustling sound in the passage, as of some one moving by; and then followed a faint, half-suppressed moan, seeming to be uttered involuntarily, under insupportable pain.

Opening the door, Millicent perceived a white figure leaning against the wall, evidently a woman, but, alarmed at Millicent's appearance, she instantly turned to retreat. Her tottering steps, however, could move only a few paces, when she was obliged to stop, being hardly able to prevent herself from falling. As she reeled back, a roll of something dropped from her arms, which Millicent, flying forward to assist her, picked up. The moonlight fell full upon it, and a cry broke from the girl as she discovered that it was a dead infant.

The woman herself was scarcely a less startling object. Long jetty tresses fell dishevelled down her shoulders, which were wrapped round with a shawl, fastened over a night-dress; and her face was pale as ashes. Her form, too, was slight and droop-

ing; and in her white garments, tinged with the brilliant moonbeams, she looked more like a wandering and unquiet phantom than a living child of earth.

For one instant she was rivetted to the spot, speechless, powerless. Then, however, she found both speech and strength—the strength of frenzy, the voice of unutterable woe. Her quick, throbbing words thrilled the ear, though scarcely rising above her breath.

"Hush! hush!" she said, with tremulous eagerness, as she caught Millicent's arm with one hand, and drew away the dead child with the other, "or we shall be heard. Is it Sarah? Tell me—who are you?"

"I'm Milly Rennel, ma'am, one of the trap-girls in the pit."

The lady's hand dropped from her arm, as if paralysed.

"From the pit!" she said, shuddering. "Then how are you here?"

"I don't know, ma'am; but I was in the workings when the accident was, and I've

just come-to. I don't know where I be, ma'am."

The lady averted her face; then said, hurriedly,

"This is Mr. Belwood's, and—and——"

"Ah! now I know, and you'd be Miss Helen, ma'am. Oh, dear! you'll fall, you'll fall, Miss Helen! Let me hold 'ee up."

"No! I do not need your help. You may go away—you can go back to your room.

The girl receded a pace or two, but immediately returned.

"Don't 'ee send me away, Miss Helen, and you so badly! No! no! I'll stop with 'ee—watch by 'ee; and do thou lay down. The dear babby won't need to have its mother, miss. It's cold dead."

"I know," said the young mother, with a burst of anguish, which made her forget everything but her sad bereavement. "I know"—and she pressed the clammy, rigid body to her bosom;—"and I have not strength to carry it out and bury it."—She sobbed

convulsively, hanging so fondly over that precious casket, rifled, alas! of its treasure. "My child, my child! I cannot even give you a grave."

"I'll take it out for 'ee, Miss Helen," said Millicent. "Do, do let me—if so be," she added, with an instinctive perception of some mystery, "thee don't want it to lay in the house."

Her words seemed to recal the lady, who looked up suddenly, fixing a searching glance on her face.

"Will you—will you do this for me?" she said, "and be secret? And yet, do not mistake me. I am a mother, but I am a wife—though from some unhappy circumstances, I cannot avow my marriage. This is why my child must be removed clandestinely. Should it be discovered here, it would soon be reported to my uncle, and his anger would kill me. But I find now I cannot—I am too weak, too faint, to fulfil the dreadful duty myself."

"It would be bringin' on your own buryin', miss—takin' away your own life. Give the poor little babby to me, miss, and I'll do it. I'll take it up to the hill-side, where all the dead's layin' together, as if they was children sleepin'. It'll be quiet there."

"Oh! will you indeed bury it in the churchyard? Dear, brave child! this will console, comfort me."

"I promise 'ee I'll do it, Miss Helen; and never misdoubt but I will. Only don't 'ee stay here in the cold, miss, or may be you'll soon be layin' by the poor babby's side."

The lady made no answer, but clasped the infant more fondly in her arms, while her lips lingered on its marble face; then recollecting herself, she checked these transports, and gave the child to Millicent.

"You have promised me to be secret?" she said, falteringly. "You will never speak of this—never, to any one?"

"Never, ma'am! I'd sooner die first."

"Thank you, thank you! He—that is—I mean your young master, Mr. Charles,

will know of it, and I will take care that he rewards you. Now you shall go."

"But don't you come, miss—no, don't, or I'll be too feared to know what I'se doin' on. Tell me the way out, miss, and I won't need any one with me."

"It must even be so," said the lady, but too conscious of her sinking powers. "Those stairs lead to a door, which opens into the garden, and here is the key of the garden-gate."

Millicent turned away, but was stopped by Helen, as she bent again over the lifeless babe. A moment more, and Millicent bore it away, leaving the bereaved mother without a hope on the wide, dreary earth.

A thick cloud was scudding over the moon, as the girl stepped with her ghostly burden into the grounds, and before she had gone many paces, the silvery orb was completely obscured, rendering it difficult to make her way to the gate. Here, while inserting the key, a large mastiff rushed out upon her, as far as his chain would extend,

but starting back, she escaped unhurt, though the fierce animal prevented her passing forth. Dreading, however, that his loud, deep bark would alarm the household, she rallied her resolution, and stepped fearlessly forward, pronouncing his name, which, as the dog frequently attended Mr. Belwood to the works, all the miners were familiar with. Lion met her advance suspiciously, receiving the first caresses with a growl; but finding her undaunted, became, by degrees, more docile, and she availed herself of a favourable moment to glide out.

She glanced rapidly up and down the road, as if, at that dead hour, there could be any fear of being observed, and felt reassured by the universal stillness. Yet the scene was solemn; for the vast, massive, impenetrable stretch of cloud, which hung like a pall overhead, was now again edged with light, shedding a spectral radiance on objects beneath. Around lay a wide, open valley, bounded on one side by the well-wooded park of the lord of the manor, and on the

other by gentle eminences, the nearest of which was crowned by the church—its venerable tower, luxuriantly draped with ivy, the hoary verdure of centuries, standing up like a fortress, invulnerable alike to man and time.

A sound reached her ear—at first, faintly, then with more distinctness; and remaining stationary, she discerned a horse and cart turn out of the church lane, and come at a quick pace down the road. To escape observation, she crept behind the hedge, waiting till it passed, when, becoming more confident, she resumed her way.

Arriving at the lane, a few hurried steps brought her to the little church, which she had often regarded at a distance so earnestly, so thoughtfully, wondering what could be its purpose. And now it rose before her in mystic majesty, a sort of guardian of the dead, nestled so trustingly and tranquilly around it—instead of a beacon and watch-tower to the living—the porch of that eternal life, which has the grave for portal.

Awe-struck and trembling, she entered the churchyard. All was still—all, except her own heart, which, why she knew not, beat and throbbed wildly; and laying the dead child on the grass, she commenced her pious task.

The spade she had caught up in her way through the garden, made, at first, but little impression on the hard, dry earth, and the less, perhaps, as her trembling hands, from hurry as much as fear, wanted their customary energy. Every breath of air stirring the foliage of the cypresses—every rustle of the waving ivy, which hung over the old belfry like a prophet's mantle—every motion of the shadows on the church tower, made her bosom, her inmost heart, swell with terror. But gradually the work proceeded; the turf was removed; the firm gravel tossed up; and the last narrow bed, at once cradle and grave, fully prepared.

Softly did she lay down the little sleeper; and though, like too many in this mighty empire, having no knowledge of God—ig-

norant alike of his worship and his existence—the thoughts that filled her mind ascended to Heaven as a consecrating prayer, hallowing both the deed and moment.

All was carefully adjusted, and she began to fill up the grave.

"Now, then, what are you doin' on there?" demanded a voice.

With a wild start, Millicent dropped the spade, and looked round. The spot, covered by the transept of the church, was buried in deep shadow, but her eyes, so accustomed to darkness, distinguished a man's head, resting on his arms, crossed above an adjacent tombstone.

"It's Black Jem!" she murmured, unconsciously.

"So thee be caught, eh?" said another rough voice, as her arm was seized behind. "A good field, forsooth, wouldn't sarve for your young 'un, but you mun needs come medlin' o' my grounds, mun you? A nice baggage you be, to bring 'un here—and in the best piece o' gravel, too, where volk has

bought their graves freehold, out and out, besides payin' burial fees and sexton!"

"Whoy, curse me, if her bain't Milly Rennel!" cried Black Jem, exultingly. "So, I've got thee, now, wench! Whoy, I reckoned, from thee goin' off in the coach, thou wor in good feather at last—booked for summut unkimmon; and here us be, arter all! But haul up the young warmint, Dick, and let's see 'un. I wouldn't ha' missed this job for a foive-pun note."

"Haw! haw! I'd be rare sorry to gie thee the chance," chuckled old Dick Tauklow, the sexton, whom, as it turned out, the miner had been aiding to procure a subject for a local doctor, carried off in the cart Millicent had observed. "I can tell 'ee, meate, they'd never ha' sent for young Jack Driver there, only for his dyin' of a toomur; and they wouldn't so much as say thankye for a kid. They don't want bodies now—more's the pity! But, howsumdever, here goes!"

"Don't you dig it up, master," cried Millicent, recovering speech, and planting her

foot in the way. "It's only a poor wee babby, gone out of a world of trouble."

"Not afore you sent it, I'll be bound," said Black Jem; "but thou'll have to make your story good agen 'mornin', when we has 'ee up to the squire. He'll fish out the rights on't, I'se warrant; and I shouldn't wonder a bit if you get's hung."

"What for?" replied Millicent. "What have I done?"

"What ha' ye done!" cried the old sexton. "Whoy, what d'ye call this? Look-ye here?"

Throwing down his spade, he lifted up the dead infant.

"It bain't your own, zure*ly!*" exclaimed Jem. "Whose be it?"

"I won't tell," answered Millicent.

"Oh! thee won't? Well, you and the squire for it, then. I'll just 'lug 'ee down to Muster Stuck, the constable, for to-night, and he'll let you know summat, I tell 'ee."

"But what'll ye say of *our* bein' here?" muttered Dick Tauklow, aside. "It might make a piece o' work, and as it won't gie

us nowght, I don't see as we've ony call mellin' wi' it. Best let the wench go, I think. There, pack off, you hussy, or it won't be long afore you packs to gaol."

"Would you let her flit, then?" growled Black Jem, darting at the girl's arm. "What a fool I be, bain't I? No, no! I'll just walk her down to old Stuck, and, rot her! he'll soon bring her to, and no bones about it."

"You won't send me to prison?" said Millicent, beseechingly. "Ah, master! don't 'ee let him be so hard on me."

"He mun do as he will," answered the sexton. "I ain't goin' to shove my fist in it, ayther to mell or make. So good morn to you both.—Haw! haw!"

And shouldering his mattock, he turned towards his domicile, at the other end of the churchyard.

"Now, thou be reg'larly in for't, my wench!" said Black Jem, echoing the hoarse laugh of the sexton. "Thee'll zurely be hung, if I has 'ee up; but thou knows

very well I bain't one to do 'ee mischief. Maybe, too, I moight make a guess whose babby it wor, for I've got summat here, I see. So just speak up, and say thou'll be my missus; and, sink me! if ever I lets out a word about it."

"Well, let go my hand, or you'll wring it aff," said Millicent, affecting to yield.

"To be zhoor—anythin' to be sociable. On*ly* say, now or never!"

"Never, then!" exclaimed Millicent.

And before he could recover her arm, she sprang over the low wall of the churchyard, and was lost in the darkness.

CHAPTER IV.

On arriving at Mr. Belwood's gate, by which she had come forth, Millicent found that in the hurry and bewilderment of flight, she had lost the key, and, consequently, was unable to get in. This was a most serious dilemma, and involved her in the greatest perplexity. She would now be unable to communicate what had occurred to the young lady, who, in all probability, was anxiously awaiting her return, and might attribute delay to negligence or perfidy. It was impossible to go to her own dwelling in the pit-village, as that, of course, was the first place at which Black Jem

would seek her; and the thought of being dragged thence to a prison, made her recoil in dismay. She had, then, no resource but to remain till daybreak in the open air.

It was now about two o'clock—the hour at which, as one of the early working gang, she usually commenced her daily labour; but she knew, from what had happened on similar occasions elsewhere, that it would be useless to proceed for this purpose to the mine, as all operations were necessarily suspended, till the baneful effects of the explosion should pass away. Had it even been otherwise, in her present bruised and feeble condition she would have remained absent, being wholly unequal to the arduous duty.

It was long before she dragged herself from the gate, unwillingly admitting the conviction that ingress was hopeless. Then, entering a field, she moved slowly along, with sore and weary feet, brooding gloomily on her situation; and, though firm in her purpose not to venture home, mechanically

taking the direction of the moor. It was not likely that Black Jem would follow her, possessing no clue to guide him ; but still, as she proceeded, she looked round every now and then, with a timid and rapid glance, half expecting to see his gaunt, ungainly figure dogging and besetting her steps.

Night was its darkest; a few waning stars twinkled feebly on high, like tired watchers; but no dawning grey yet marked the east. Still, the lark was up, carolling his merry song from every bush, giving solitude a voice of thankfulness and praise. A soft, delicious air floated by, rich with tributary fragrance, swept in profusion from many a teeming meadow and hedge and garden, all freshened with the summer dew. It brushed Millicent's cheek so gently, so lovingly, that the poor girl felt soothed and cheered by it, as if some invisible Intelligence were moving about her, whispering hope, and administering sympathy. But walking became more and more painful; her utmost efforts were spent; and, at last, she could go no further.

Completely exhausted, she sank on the grass, longing only for repose.

That aching, morbid, nervous restlessness which follows excessive fatigue, shooting a sense of pain and numbness through every limb, and giving mercurial vitality to the eyes, closed in vain, still kept her awake, tossing continually from one side to the other, without obtaining relief. It is at such moments, indeed, when we desire oblivion, that the mind is most active, and calls from its recesses a succession of long-forgotten incidents, stalking, melancholy experiences, which, like Macbeth's conscience, murder sleep. And thus recollections of suffering, endurance, and despair, almost faded in distance—memories of the dark and bitter past —apprehensions and anticipations of the future, and a deep and feverish impression of the last twenty hours, so fraught alike with peril and promise, kept Millicent's troubled brain in an incessant whirl.

But in the labyrinth of disordered and distracting thoughts, one idea was almost

constantly prominent. She was the confidant of the great lady—the sole repositary of her secret, which she knew, ignorant as she was, involved the most momentous consequences. This reflection elevated and inspired her. To recal Helen's words, which rang in her affectionate mind like music—sad, but still sweet; to remember that there was a tender link between them—that she might suffer, perhaps die for her, developed in her character a degree of resolution equal to the emergency. Her terror, indeed, at the savage threats of Black Jem was undiminished; but, amidst her worst and most depressing fears, something bright glimmered through the mist, giving strength and courage.

Lost in reverie, she did not notice that it was gradually growing light, and was surprised, at last, on looking up, to find it broad day. She arose, cramped and shivering, impelled by hunger to make her way to the village, where, indeed, she was obliged to appear at eight o'clock, as it was what is called the reckoning, or pay-day, which oc-

curred only once in three weeks; and should she neglect to attend, her wages would be kept back till the next settlement.

Crossing the hills, she lost the soft and picturesque landscape, now under the first glow of morning, flushed and sparkling with beauty, and came on the wide, barren, and treeless moor. The black and deserted pit-buildings, and its shapeless heap, crowned by the massive scaffold, loomed dismally into view, as if, in mockery of the bright sky and glorious sunshine, they shadowed forth evil and death. Soon great cracks appeared in the earth; here the ground lapped over—there, perfectly sound in appearance, it reverberated the tread, indicating a subterraneous excavation. The eye looked in vain over the wide tract for any glimpse of verdure, and the only trace of vegetation discoverable, at intervals far between as the green spots of Sahara, were strips of grimy-coloured grass, struggling for air through a coat of coal-dust. In short, the earth, in this irreclaimable waste, seemed to have rent

asunder at the pit, and vomited a torrent of ashes over the blasted soil.

A dirty, rugged, execrable road, torn with ruts and cracks, and teeming with filth, led to the pit-village, consisting of some dozen groups of hovels, having the appearance of being tossed together rather than built. Standing on ground subject to continual land-slips, and constructed of the very worst materials, they indeed presented an aspect which would have been grotesque, had it not been also utterly wretched. Some, towers of Pisa in their way, leaned on one side, as if on the point of falling; others were actually askew—the ground-floor, unfettered by its shallow foundation, slanting in one direction, and the gable in the other; and the eye fell everywhere on long, gaping seams in the brickwork, oblique doors, tottering and broken chimneys, and desperate fractures in the tiled roofs. Paneless windows, stuffed with straw or paper, completed the picture of ruin, serving, at the same time, to exclude light and shut in smoke, which,

long denied egress by the chimney, was forced to find its way out by any accidental aperture.

Neither church nor school softened this sad parade of misery and desolation; and even the zealous Wesleyans, those pioneers of religion, whom I have found pursuing their busy ministry among the lowest savages, had raised no tabernacle here. Priest and Levite had passed on the other side, leaving the miner, like his habitation, neglected and uncared for.

Perhaps, it is this complete isolation, entailing a general mutual dependance, which renders the race of pitmen so thoroughly united, so prompt to assist, to befriend, to protect each other. Remembering how cruelly their moral interest is neglected, it is not so easy to explain the strange but unquestionable fact that there are fewer criminals among the mining population than any other class of operatives.

Millicent's domicile was a kind of outhouse, abutting from the back of one of the

zigzag tenements, occupied by Jack Rollin and his mother. It had no window, but the air, such as it was, entered through two brick holes, and numberless little intervals in the roof. This was so low, that if ever she stood erect, it was at the imminent risk of displacing the tiles; and the whole structure was of that crazy description, that it seemed as though a good blast of wind must inevitably overthrow it. The brick floor, like every other part, was in the last stage of decay; and being a foot below the ground outside, and standing over an abandoned coal-digging, perpetually exuded damp, defying all Millicent's efforts to keep it clean. A few bricks to serve the purpose of a grate, a straw bed, and a stool, constituted all the furniture of the little cabin; and its only other contents were a heap of coals, a saucepan without a lid, a fractured drinking-mug, and a solitary plate. For such miserable accommodation the poor girl paid a shilling weekly, mulcted regularly every reckoning day from her wages.

Her first act, on reaching home, was to kindle a fire, as well to warm her benumbed limbs as to prepare breakfast, for which the lidless saucepan was brought into immediate requisition. Indeed, considering all things, it fulfilled very effectively the functions of a coffee-pot; and a mug of the warm fluid, with some brown bread, composed of the worst possible grain, quickly supplied her wants.

The red, flashing coals shed a genial glow on her face, chasing away its recent excessive paleness, and heightening its natural bloom. A softer, sweeter countenance it would be impossible to imagine. Eyes of the purest azure—at once quick, deep, and pensive, gleaming beneath lids round and full, and fringed with long jet lashes, poured a tender radiance on her cheeks, which had that rare delicacy of colouring said to be caused by long seclusion from light. A coarse flannel jacket, and trousers of the same material, though made loose, showed but too clearly her faultless contour, every

graceful limb being in singularly beautiful proportion, an inspiration for Phidias.

Before long it was time to proceed to the pay, and she reluctantly set forth, notwithout renewed apprehensions of meeting the detested doggie. The village, however, was now all astir, and she was beginning to take courage from this cheering circumstance, when there rose a general cry of "Wor ork," by which the miners were accustomed to warn each other of the approach of a constable; and, turning round, she perceived Black Jem coming up the road, in company with Stuck, the headborough.

CHAPTER V.

Millicent, recalling Black Jem's threat of the previous night, had no doubt that the constable was in pursuit of herself, and, winged by fear, she flew up the road, hoping to find protection from some of the pitmen. A low, coal-blackened beer-shop, at the end of the village, of which the buttie was proprietor, now seemed a haven of refuge. Appointed as the place of pay, it was thronged with the workpeople, both inside and out, where, as usual at roadside hostelries, benches and tables, in this case of the same unwholesome complexion as the house, accommodated a large company.

" Hilloa, Milly, what's the matter?" cried Jack Rollin, as she came up. " It ain't thou the headborough's arter, be it?"

" Yes," replied Millicent. " The doggie's set him on me, all because I won't take up with him, in place of poor Sue."

" Ho! he'd have thou take up with him, would he? He's a noice 'un, I don't think; but I tell 'ee what, wench, thou'd best be hung first."

" He says he'll have me hung, Jack. Oh! don't 'ee let the headborough take me—pray don't. If I could only see the Viewer, he wouldn't let me be took, I'm sure."

" Nor I won't ayther, if I can help it. But what have they got against 'ee?"

" It's about a dead babby as were found with me, and I don't know how I'll be righted yet. It's all the more agen me, I know; but, as true as death, Jack, I've done nowght wrong. What I done was out o' kindness like."

" There's ne'er a body alive would do a kindness sooner, lass, if so be thee could—

that *I* know! and, stash me! I won't see you put on. But I be very much afeard, though, if so be thee don't speak out, and tell the rights on't, a dead babby'll turn out cruel black agen you. Howsomever, here they be, and we'll see what they's arter." And Black Jem and Stuck came up.

"That be she, Muster Stuck," observed Jem, pointing at Millicent. "Never moind them hollarin' out, but lug her aff, brisk."

"Hold hard a bit," said Jack Rollin. "I won't stand by, and see the best wench in the village hauled aff, and never speak up for her. Let me see the man as'll lay hands on her; and him and me for't, that's all!"

"Well done, Jack!" resounded on all sides, at the conclusion of this speech, while the whole company crowded to the spot. "Pluck up, Milly, wench! pluck up!"

"You's had best all keep to your own concarns, and let she be," cried Black Jem, looking round with a scowl. "Never a one of you's 'll bounce I, I can tell 'ee."

"You'll none of you mell with the queen's officer, I doubt," said the headborough, Stuck, who, to say truth, did really seem to doubt it.

"Then, don't thou mell of we," returned Jack Rollin, still standing before Millicent.

"Here, don't have a row about nothin'," interposed Sam Whittaker. "What's the wench done?—what have you got agen her?"

"She's murdered a babby—that's what's agen her," replied Black Jem, fiercely. "I cotched her in the nick of it, and it's me as has her took up. Who's goin' to put a stop to it?"

"I be," answered Jack Rollin, "and so be the whole lot on us. It's all gammon about murderin'—reg'lar gammon—and we won't stand and see a poor wench put on by a doggie."

"But you won't mell o' the queen's officer, mister, nevertheless?" urged Stuck, falteringly, perceiving that the crowd was growing very excited.

Before any one could reply, he was

accosted by the buttie, who, as host of the beer-shop, viewed with great dissatisfaction any incident attracting attention elsewhere, and thereby suspending the demand for beer.

"I'll tell you what it is, Muster Stuck," said the buttie, confidentially; "you'd best take yourself off, and leave this 'eer consarn for another time. They're talkin' o' givin' you a ridin'."

"A ridin'!"

"Yes, carryin' you round the village, and then duckin' you in the horsepond."

"No! sure*ly!*" said Stuck, receding.—"They won't mell o' the queen's officer, mister?"

But the buttie had turned to Black Jem and Rollin, who were still in dispute.

"Now, then, be you goin' to foight it out, or what?" he demanded. "If you ain't, there's no use o' your keepin' on jawin'. I'm goin' to have the pay d'rectly, and the chaps wants a drap o' beaver, not this 'eer row kept up all about a wench. Come, Jem,

you be off. You see, you can't have your will now. There's the headborough boltin'."

"Whew! there he goes!" shouted Sam Whittaker, pointing after the retreating Stuck. "War ork!"

"War ork!" cried a chorus of voices, and a large party, stimulated by the hope of diversion, set off in pursuit, causing the luckless constable to take to his heels, and fairly fly the field.

"Rot the old sneak!" muttered Black Jem, turning away. "I hope they'll cotch 'un, and gie him a good duckin'."

Thus the prompt and skilful manœuvre of Beercroft, the buttie, had been completely successful, putting an immediate stop to the threatened hostilities; and there was now a general call for beer, which, as usual at such times, was lavishly supplied, on the strength of the approaching pay.

It cannot be too widely known that these pays were made partly in kind—that is, the workpeople, after waiting three or four weeks for a settlement, received the amount

of their wages in provisions, or articles of consumption, frequently of the vilest quality, and charged at exorbitant prices. This practice, which has received the odious name of the Truck System, was originally carried to such a length, that it attracted the notice of the legislature, and a wise, though tardy, act of parliament declared it unlawful. The statute, however, like many others framed for the protection of the poor, is easily evaded, and in the extensive coal district of Staffordshire, is little more than a dead letter. It is true, the miners are not now paid in commodities, but they receive their wages only at long intervals, during which, having no money in hand, they are obliged to subsist on credit, easily procured at the village huckster's, who, as well as the keeper of the beer-shop, is under tribute for their custom to the proprietor of the colliery. When at length the settlement day arrives, the operative is not paid in cash, the plain undoubted purpose of the law, but in a draft on some provincial bank,

twenty or thirty miles distant, and which, of course, he is but too glad to get changed by the provision-dealer, thus secure of his bill, and able to dictate his own terms. Such was the system in force at the works of the opulent Mr. Belwood.

As soon as Millicent had received her cheque, she made her way through the throng to the door, resolving, if she could possibly elude Black Jem, to wait in the village till dark, and then proceed to Belwood House, and report what had happened to the young lady. But in passing down the village, she saw that the relentless doggie was following, and, defenceless in her own dwelling, she ran for protection into the hovel adjoining, tenanted by Jack Rollin and his mother.

Dame Rollin, who had herself been employed in the coal-pit, in the successive grades of trapper, sifter, and bearer, was now, at fifty, a decrepid old woman; but asthma and rheumatism, those scourges of the mine, though they had bowed her

frame, had not broken or weakened her spirit.

"I'd loike to catch 'un comin' here arter you," she said, in reply to Millicent's appeal for her intervention. "There, set 'ee down, and don't mind. I'll see he do thee no harm."

"But I can't go home for him," replied Millicent, with a look of despair. "He'll be hangin' about till he sees me; and then, if so be no one's by, he'll have me off. He'll never let me go, I know."

"Well, at the worst on't, he can only ha' you up afore Squire Belwood; so be of good heart. The squire knows there be too much go on with babbies hereabout, to be partickler hard on thou, speshly as this 'un warn't your'n. It's bein' dead's agen 'ee, but then it died nat'ral, you says."

"That he did, poor wee thing! But they may do what they will, they'll get no word on't out o' me—if I go to prison ever so."

"Ah! you maun gie yourself up for other volk, wench, and get no thanks thereby. If

it comes to that, I'd have 'ee speak out, and make no gear on't. Howsomever, as thou's afeard to keep in your own place, thou'd best bide here a day or two; and I'll get Jack to see and speak up for 'ee, if so be he even goes to the squire himself."

This proposition, which seemed to insure present safety, was joyfully accepted by Millicent, who, now relieved from apprehension, thought it better to defer proceeding to Miss Helen till the next day, when her appearance at Belwood House would be less likely to excite suspicion. But a long time was to elapse, and events very important to her intervene, before she again saw Helen.

CHAPTER VI.

THE mine not being workable, as the deadly gases arising from the explosion still pervaded it, there was idle time for the pitmen; and, on leaving the buttie's, Jack Rollin passed the remainder of the day at a cock-fight. Perhaps, rugged though he was, had the better qualities of his strong and manly character been drawn out by even the initiatory training of education, instead of being left to sink to a level lower than the brutes, he would have shrunk in disgust from a pastime so degrading, and spent his leisure in the civilising fellowship of a book. As it was, it was late when he returned

home, and heard from his mother, to whom he was tenderly attached, of her having given asylum to Millicent.

Night came on wet and stormy, making Millicent glad that she was not to pass it, like the previous one, in the open air, or even in her own shattered and shelterless domicile. In the latter respect, indeed, the abode of the Rollins was but a slight improvement; but all the inconvenience fell on Jack alone, who, with a profound indifference to the weather, occupied the upper room, regardless of the rain which streamed through the broken roof, saturating his bed, and the violent gusts of wind entering by the same airy and permanent apertures. Still, with such a larger share of comfort, and though worn in body and mind, Millicent could not sleep. The anxiety, the extreme uncertainty of her position, and the probable fate before her, now, after the terrors of the day, assumed a sterner form, a darker, gloomier colouring. Long habit had made her heedless of the precarious state of

the house; but after a time, even she began to observe, as the tempest increased in fury, that the walls seemed to rock and totter, and the brick floor shake beneath. It was not rain that poured down, but a torrent, one incessant, unbroken flood, mingled with large hailstones, beating the half-demolished lattices like shot, while peal on peal of thunder broke overhead, amidst vivid flashes of lightning. Gradually Millicent listened to the loud, mighty voice of the storm with an undefinable feeling of awe. Was it imagination, or did she, in real truth, hear another voice below?—an answering echo from the depths and bowels of the earth!

A host of vague fears rose distractingly in her mind, which she strove in vain to compose. She knew that the ground, having for years been worked for coal, was in many places hollow, and more than once had slipped, causing serious loss of life, and ingulfing entire houses in the abyss. Might she not be on the brink of another of these chronic earthquakes? As the dreadful

thought occurred, she was almost blinded by lightning, followed instantly by a tremendous clap of thunder: the old, ruinous walls tottered; the earth yawned beneath; she could no longer doubt that they were sinking.

Dame Rollin and Jack were aroused by this last shock, which was accompanied by a shower of broken bricks from the walls, while the roof, suddenly deprived of its props, fell in with a crash.

"Mother! Milly! where be you?" cried Jack, in a tone of despair.

But though a fearful scream, rising above the din of the elements, announced too clearly their danger, if not their fate, he saw that it was impossible to reach them, and narrowly escaped himself by jumping from the casement.

Millicent had sprung desperately from the bed, dragging with her the almost helpless dame, just as the paved floor broke through, and, thrown off their feet by the concussion, both fell into the hole. Down they went,

almost suffocated by the pent air and dense clouds of dust, mingled with falling rubbish; but, fortunately, a few feet below, there was a ledge, heaped with siftings, which, being loose and soft with the perpetual damp, broke Millicent's fall, although she was burdened with the weight of the dame. Bruised, breathless, and powerless, she yet contrived to stay herself with her hands, or, as the ledge was extremely narrow, they would both have fallen over, and inevitably have perished. Even as it was, indeed, they could scarcely hope to survive.

From the rank, noxious odours, it was evident to Milly that they hung on the verge of an exhausted coal-digging, which, as frequently occurs in those parts, had for years been covered with a landslip, and was now, by a second convulsion, opened anew. Life, indeed, would have failed immediately, only that the most fatal gases had escaped, admitting, at the same time, a rush of fresh air, though the fallen

house, with its heap of bricks and rafters, had now closed the aperture. In short, they were buried alive.

"This is horrible," said Millicent, at length finding words. "Do you feel much hurt, mother?" for so she always addressed the dame.

"Grievous," answered Mrs. Rollin, with a groan; "every bone in my back be broke, I do believe; and thou, poor wench, maun be a power worse, I'm sure. Oh! how be us to manage?"

"We must hold on, if so be we can, though it's rere hard to. But Jack won't be long comin' to help us."

"No! not if he be able, poor lad, and if we can only keep up; but I be sadly afeard we can't. Oh, Jack! Jack! help!"

Jack, but too sensible of their peril, had hastened to arouse the neighbours, and a strong force was soon on the spot, with picks and shovels, endeavouring to clear a way to the pit. But the task was difficult, and only to be accomplished very gradually, as, with

all their eagerness to proceed, they might, by precipitation, dislodge the beam, which, covering the hole, alone prevented the incumbent heap from sinking; and so destroy those whom they sought to rescue. What was more trying, they had to work entirely by guess, for the rain and wind instantly extinguished lights, and the darkness was unbroken by a single star. But to them, so accustomed to the murky, Cyclopean recesses of the mine, this was not of such serious consequence, and the work progressed steadily, though slowly. At length, an opening was made just above the digging.

Millicent was by this time reduced to the last extremity, and Dame Rollin, after vain efforts to bear up, had fainted, obliging her to take one hand from the ledge, and with it keep her from falling. The strain was so intense, so violent, that she thought her arms would be wrenched from their sockets. The pressure on her chest, too, had become a dead weight, rendering respiration painful, while every moment the dense, fetid air

became more stifling. Still, the brave girl held on.

A rope, worn with long service, and giving but slender promise of security, was fastened to the beam above, and Jack descended, peering into the dark gulf for some trace of the two females.

Millicent, knowing it would be impossible for him to see, would have called out, but had lost all power of speech, and Jack was passing, when a groan broke from Mrs. Rollin, and indicated their situation. Instantly he swung towards them, and, with an effort almost superhuman, caught up his mother, and slowly raised himself on the rope. Millicent saw no more, except a dark, shapeless body, like a cloud, oscillating above, amidst deathlike silence, heightened by the heavy pattering of the rain, and the rush of the wind. Then there was a loud cheer, and she knew that the dame was safe.

All this time she clung desperately to the ledge, with eyes turned anxiously upward, wondering whether steps would next be

taken to achieve her own deliverance. For a moment it seemed doubtful, and her blood ran cold as, receding as far as possible from the abyss, she thought of the horrible fate that would then overtake her. But her apprehensions were speedily allayed. Jack, assured of the safety of his mother, again descended; and with a quaking heart—trembling, breathless—she found herself hovering over the pit. Jack supported her with one arm, while his other quivered in every muscle, scarcely sufficing to grasp the rope. The poor girl tried to fix her eyes on the opening, which, amidst the Cimmerian darkness, was indicated by a less intense shade, but her head drooped, unequal to the slightest effort. Even her hands relaxed their hold, and she was sinking powerless on Jack, when a strong and sinewy arm darted down from above, and lifted her bodily to the ground.

"Poor wench! she be dreadful knocked up," cried a pitying voice, which Millicent, yet scarcely herself, did not recognise as

Doll Stukeley's. "I'll take good care on her now," added Doll, "and get her to bed, and her'll be well enough by mornin', I be bound."

No one objected to the proposed arrangement, and, taking Millicent by the arm, Doll led her away, before Jack, who might possibly have prevented her, emerged from the pit.

Millicent did not see who was her companion till she entered Doll's room, and then, notwithstanding her repugnance to Doll, was but too glad to lie down. She was, however, allowed but little time for rest, being aroused by a rude shake, and on looking up, she discovered not the swathed figure of Doll, but Black Jem and the constable.

CHAPTER VII.

The park mentioned in a preceding chapter, as bounding with tall and stately woods one side of the valley, surrounded a noble mansion, called Croyland Hall, till very recently the proud appanage of a marquis, but now—so mutable is everything mundane!—the residence of Mr. Mandeville Harley, a knight of the shire.

Mr. Mandeville Harley was a scion of the ancient stock of Adam; but in the course of successive ages, the time-honouring dust of antiquity had so obscured the Harleian pedigree, that not only was there a difficulty concerning the identity of his grandfather,

but his very father was unknown. In this respect, he stood precisely in the situation of the Athenian stripling, who threw stones at Diogenes. But the seed had fallen in good soil, fruitful as the golden streams of Francisco and Sacramento, the Abana and Pharpar of the West; and his parents, had he ever chanced to fall in their way, would doubtless have found him a perfect treasure.

But it was not only in one point of view that singularity attached to him. One of the great magnates of Mammon, the sources and springs of his wealth, now spread in every direction, had, at one time, been as occult as his paternity. Neither London nor Liverpool had ranked him in the host of their merchant princes; no swarming factory had gained him a name and status in Manchester; no Cyclopean forge claimed his fealty for Birmingham. He had gone on increasing every hour in stature, augmenting daily in bulk, year after year—unknown, unseen, unheard of. Too cautious to venture argosies on the vast waters of the At-

lantic, he was still an intrepid navigator, embarking in a paper boat, another John Law, on the treacherous ocean of the Stock Exchange. And stoutly, gallantly did he hold on, through shoals and reefs and quicksands, where many a sturdy bark was shivered to fragments. Whatever stock he dabbled in, whatever hazard, though whole legions were ruined, the immaculate, dazzling Mandeville turned up a prize. His luck was a proverb; a thing to swear by. On that pathless sea, indeed, he rivalled the daring, equalled the success, of the famous Genoese. Bartholomew Close was his Columbia—his New World, Speculation.

Thus, like a fat weed, did Harley spring up, thrive, flourish. At last, the cap of Fortunatus, the lamp of Aladdin, were more sterile than his purse; and at the temple of that commercial oracle of Delphos, Diana of Threadneedle-street, his name on paper matched a monarch's head on coin.

Of course, Mr. Mandeville Harley (how he acquired the name of Mandeville was

one of the Mysteries of Udolpho) enjoyed the dignity of justice of the peace; and in this character he was informed, early one morning, that a prisoner had been brought up for examination, and was now awaiting judgment.

The culprit had been thrust into the magistrate's room, at the lodge, where Mr. Basset, an attorney, who discharged the functions of clerk, had already installed himself at the table. The constable, Stuck, still lingered outside, talking to one of the witnesses, while Mr. Thornhill, the surgeon, who was connected with the case, paced restlessly up and down before the gate, pulling out his watch every two minutes, and giving a rueful shake of the head. At length, the porter, who had been sent up to the house to announce their arrival, was seen returning.

"His honour's comin' down d'rectly, sir,' he said to the surgeon, as he drew nigh.

"Oh! coming down directly," repeated Mr. Thornhill.

"Comin' down d'rectly," echoed Stuck, whose cocked ear caught the words.

The witness gave a sullen growl.

"Sarvant, mister," said Stuck, with a respectful nod, as he stepped up to the porter. "Nevertheless, I think as I heerd you say as his honour was——"

"Comin' down d'rectly."

"Ah! thankye, mister, nevertheless. How *is* his honour to-day?"

"What?" said the porter, with a look of wonder.

"I hope as his honour is quite hearty, mister, nevertheless."

"Oh, to be sure! What's to hinder him?"

"He! he! he! Wary good, mister. If *he* bain't hearty, I don't know who's loike to be."

"You bothers him, above a bit, with these-'eer cases o' yourn, I tell you," resumed the porter, "and he ain't over and above pleased. Why don't you bring up a poacher, as is always as good as game to a gentleman, and not these-'eer sort o' folk? Does the wench own to anythin'?"

"Oh, I believe you, nevertheless. She owns to a crime as is often one o' the blackest dye, and one as my eyes is opened to, mister. It's what the wust o' people does, nevertheless —what all the murderers, and them sort, owns to. In short, she say she ain't been doin' nothin'."

"That all? Well, you ha'n't got much out on her, then. You can't make nothin' out of nothin'!"

"Can't you, mister? Oh! I always makes a warrant out on't. I bain't nattrally 'spicious, but I knows what I be about, and when a blade says he ain't done nothin', I arxes no more questions. I 'mediuatly seizes on him, and, afore he can say 'Jack,' off I has 'un. Nothin', in my 'pinion, is one o' the wust o' crimes."

"You're a queer 'un, any way," said the porter. "But here's his honour!"

This announcement silenced Stuck, and as, glancing up at the mansion, he perceived the great man coming forth, attended by Mr. Fallowfat, his steward, a feeling of tre-

pidation stole over him, which he was quite unable to repress.

To his admiring eye, even Mr. Fallowfat was a fostering minister of greatness, and, therefore, it may well be supposed that his veneration was mingled with awe in the presence of Harley, whom, in common with the country round, he regarded as a corporeal Golconda, his riches being roughly estimated by him at the fabulous amount of fifty millions, while others believed that he could pay off the National Debt at a pinch, and feel very little inconvenienced.

With measured steps, and a stare of inquiry at each individual, Mr. Mandeville Harley entered the lodge, and placed himself in the magisterial chair.

"Let me see," he said to Basset, the clerk: "I have not looked at the warrant, but I think they told me the charge was a serious one. Setting gins for hares, I suppose?"

"Not *quite* so bad as that, sir," answered Basset, in a low voice, though it lays her

open to a more severe penalty—thanks to our lenient game-laws !"—He said this with a smile, as if it were only a complimentary way of speaking, and the leniency of the game-laws, in point of fact, was a subject for anything but gratitude.—"She is charged with concealing a birth, sir, under rather suspicious circumstances."

"Oh !" said Harley, with a dense look, his eye, in the interim, having wandered to the *Times*.

"Shall I call the case on, sir ?"

"Ah ! yes, do."

"Constable !"

"Here, mister, sir," cried Stuck, seizing his forelock, and pulling a bow.

"Bring the prisoner forward, and inform his worship what is alleged against her."

Millicent—for the culprit was no other—in obedience to the clerk's mandate, was brought to the end of the table, and formally accused.

"She is one of the colliery girls, I see," said Mr. Harley, glancing at her attire.

"This case should be referred to Mr. Belwood."

"Both Mr. Belwood and Mr. Charles are in London, sir," replied Basset; "otherwise, as the girl is in their employ, I should not have troubled you in the business."

"And is it possible so young a creature can have been found burying a child?" said Mr. Harley, who was really a good-natured man in general, confining sharp practice to the funds. "Why, she is little more than a child herself. You see how these good-looking girls go to the bad, Mr. Basset."

"Too true, sir," answered Basset, gravely.

"What have you to say to the charge, prisoner?" asked Mr. Harley.

"Nothing, please, sir."

Stuck, who was standing close behind, held up his hands in horror.

"Nothin'! she ain't got nothin' to say!" he observed to Black Jem.

"Nothing is not sufficient, prisoner," remarked Mr. Harley, who lightened the tedium of the magisterial functions with occa-

sional pleasantries, introduced at the most serious moments. "It won't do to commit these sort of things, and then, on being called to account, say only 'Nothing.'"—Here there was an exchange of smiles between Basset and Fallowfat, on which Stuck, taking the hint, seemed ready to split his sides.—"In short," pursued Mr. Harley, "you must say something, and that something to the purpose. What were you doing in the churchyard?"

"I were buryin' the babby, sir," replied Millicent.

"Oho! now we come to it. I thought you were doing something, though you can only say nothing."—Fallowfat, Basset, and Stuck were here quite overcome.—"Set that down, Mr. Basset, if you please. I think it very important."

"So it is, sir; a very great admission," replied Basset. "Still there is evidence, I believe, to prove that against her, so there is little merit in avowing it. Just bring the witness forward, Mr. Stuck."

Thus summoned, Black Jem, after being duly sworn, described the situation in which he had discovered Millicent.

"And your impression is, that she was there for the purpose she says?" asked Mr. Harley, with a sagacious look.

"She were buryin' the babby, your worship, as clear as snuff," answered Black Jem.

"And, of course, you interfered, and prevented her?"

"That's just it."

"Was the child dead?"

"Dead as a door-nail, your worship."

"Do you suppose the prisoner to be its mother?"

"I can't say, for that. She's reether young, it's sartin; but there be wenches in the pit who've had babbies at her age. I know she's no good."

"Oh! you know it, do you?" said Mr. Harley, with a waggish look, which had immediate effect on the muscles of Fallowfat and Co. "Pray, what particular ground have you for such knowledge?"

"It's under ground I've seed most on her, your worship. I've been doggie over her now, goin' on ten or eleven year—ever since she were a little 'un; and I can say, safe, there ain't a worse girl in the pit."

"Then, she must be on her way to the bottomless pit," said Mr. Harley. "But pray, my man, had the child any clothes on, when it came into your hands?"

"No, your worship, but it were wrapped up in summat. Here it be."

"An India shawl!" exclaimed Basset.

In the general surprise at this discovery, no one noticed a hasty movement of Mr. Thornhill, the surgeon, who suddenly evinced great agitation, and, being of a very excitable temperament, did not again recover himself.

"This seems very strange, Mr. Basset," said Harley; "yet the girl, when you look at her, wears an air of such innocence, that, upon my life, considering every circumstance, I can't think ill of her; and, do you know, I fancy some cunning hand has made

her a tool in the business. Does there appear to have been any violence used?"

"I really don't know, sir; but Mr. Thornhill, I believe, has examined the body."

Mr. Thornhill, who had been waiting with the greatest impatience to give evidence, was now sworn.

"From careful examination, I can pronounce the infant to have been still-born," he said, in reply to a question from Basset. "The birth was premature, and must have been recent."

"You are able to speak positively on these points, Mr. Thornhill?"

"Most certainly."

"This is of great consequence, sir," said Basset to Mr. Harley. "There can now be no suspicion of infanticide; and we have merely to inquire as to whether there has been any concealment."

"Perhaps Mr. Thornhill, as the only practitioner in the neighbourhood, can throw some further light on the affair," replied Harley, his quick eye detecting uneasiness in the sur-

geon's manner. "The prisoner cannot be the infant's mother, I should think?"

"I can say decidedly that she is not, sir," answered Thornhill. "I happen to know that she was one of the sufferers from the late explosion, which took place about the time the infant must have been born; and, what is more to the purpose, she was then under treatment by me, in a state of insensibility."

"That is indeed conclusive as to her. But have you, among your numerous patients, no clue to the real offender?"

"I cannot say I have, at this moment," replied Mr. Thornhill, with some confusion.

"Pray think again," said Mr. Harley, incredulously.

"It is unnecessary, sir," replied the irritable surgeon. "I have given you the best answer in my power. With respect to this girl, I beg to say it is not true that she is a bad character, as the last witness, who appears to be very vindictive against her, has just stated. I learnt yesterday from Mr.

Phipps, the Viewer of the colliery, that she was one of the best conducted persons in Mr. Belwood's employment."

"I am very glad to hear that, at any rate," returned Mr. Harley, with a glance at Millicent, who, however, maintained the same dogged, indifferent look.

"Really, sir, there seems very little against the prisoner, if she will only state how the infant came into her hands," remarked Basset.

"But *will* she state that?" returned Mr. Harley. "Now, come, girl—tell the truth—how do you account for having possession of the child?"

"It's mother gave it me, sir; but I can't tell who she be," replied Millicent.

"Can't means won't, I suppose?" said Basset.

Millicent was silent.

"Possibly the prisoner does not know the mother," observed Mr. Thornhill, hastily: "such things have been. If you will permit me to offer a suggestion, sir," he added to Mr. Harley, "I think you would best arrive

at the truth by suffering the case to stand over for a few days, as Mr. Charles Belwood, the girl's employer, will then be here, and he would doubtless be able to further the inquiry."

"As she is one of Mr. Belwood's people, sir, perhaps this would be the best course to adopt," said Basset, who made it a rule never to act in opposition to the Belwoods.

"And the girl must pass the interval in prison, I suppose?" replied Mr. Harley.

"Yes, sir, unless she can procure recognizances for her appearance, which, I presume, no one will undertake."

"Pardon me, I will be surety for her," cried Thornhill. "I was about to offer myself before you mentioned it, feeling assured of the girl's innocence."

Mr. Harley, whom constant rubbing had rendered as keen as a needle, looked up quickly at these words, as if suspecting that the worthy surgeon knew as much of the mystery as Millicent; but he made no remark, and the proffered bail was accepted.

CHAPTER VIII.

The family of Belwood held such a position in the county as might well induce Basset, and even the opulent and powerful Mr. Harley, to refrain from any proceeding likely to give them offence. Mr. Belwood, senior, was sole proprietor of the adjacent collieries and ironworks, and might be considered Mr. Harley's near neighbour, his mansion, embowered in extensive pleasure-grounds, being only two miles distant. He was also his colleague in the representation of the shire.

Mr. Belwood had early in life been left a widower, with an only son; and, in less than a year afterwards, received a new charge,

in the orphan daughter of a brother, who, after losing his fortune in a disastrous speculation, had died a bankrupt. The two cousins, thrown thus closely together, were Charles and Helen.

Sullen and severe, Mr. Belwood was not a guardian calculated to win upon the affections of a timid and gentle girl; but if the little stranger, so prematurely cast on the world, did not meet with a second parent in her nearest relation, she found a zealous protector in one of his friends. Such was Mr. Thornhill, who, under a rugged exterior, and a morbidly irritable disposition, was animated by a warm and tender heart; and, moreover, was reported, by one or two venerable gossips, familiar with times long gone by, to have been a rejected suitor of her mother. However this might be, he certainly evinced from the beginning the liveliest interest in Helen's welfare. Through his influence, she had been carefully educated, acquiring proficiency in all the conventional accomplishments of the day, and about two years previously to

the time under consideration, had quitted the wearisome routine of the school-room for the honours of the mansion.

It was now nearly a month since the elder Mr. Belwood had proceeded to London, to investigate the affairs of his factor, who, after conducting business successfully for many years, had suddenly failed; and, as already shown, intelligence had just arrived of Mr. Belwood having been seized with a paralytic stroke, threatening speedy dissolution. These facts duly set forth, it will be necessary to revert for a moment to Mr. Thornhill, left with Millicent at Mr. Harley's lodge.

Bidding the poor girl follow, the worthy practitioner sallied out to the road, where his old four-wheel, drawn by his older horse, yclept Speedwell, on account of possessing an unblemished reputation as a slow coach, was in waiting, and he directed her to mount into the seat behind. Millicent only looked at him in wonder, but the command being repeated, obeyed; and the doctor drove off at Speedwell's most dashing pace—a jog-trot.

More than half an hour elapsed before they arrived at his residence—a pretty little villa, facing the high road. Here the good dame officiating as his cook and housekeeper, Bundy by name, was not a little shocked, at first sight, by the appearance of Millicent, especially when informed that she was to be received as a guest into the kitchen. But besides being one not to be contradicted, Mr. Thornhill was looked up to by Mrs. Bundy as a domestic Admirable Crichton, and, consequently, she never ventured to oppose him.

"And, to be sure," she remarked to herself, as she took charge of Millicent, "the poor wench have a most bonny face, as do one good to see, though, as far as I've heerd say, the miners bear a cruel bad name—that's the truth on't. But the master knows best."

"She's an orphan," said the doctor, testily, "and a very good girl. But take her into the kitchen, and give her something to eat; for, I believe, she's starving. What do you stand staring at?"

"Lor bless you, sir, I bain't staring at all."

She hurried Millicent away, leaving her master in the hall, where he continued to pace to and fro, keeping up the periodical reference to his watch, till, at last, supposing a sufficient interval had elapsed, he recalled the housekeeper, and inquired if Millicent had finished breakfast.

"Bless you, sir, the poor lass hasna swallowed a bit," was the answer; "but I have made her take a cup of tea, and it seems just to have set 'un up again."

"Why doesn't she eat her victuals?" demanded the doctor, furiously. "You've got nothing fit for her to eat, I suppose—nothing good enough. You never have."

"Now, don't you scold, sir—don't you," said the practised Bundy, with apron raised to the corner of her eye.

"Why, you foolish woman, I'm not scolding — I'm not finding fault. But I may say a word in my own house, I presume, mayn't I?"

"Lor, yes, sir, to be sure; and somethin's

vexed you, too, out o' doors—somethin's gone wrong, I know."

"The woman would provoke a saint!" exclaimed the fiery doctor. "I tell you, I was never in a better temper in my life. There now, go away, and bring the girl up. I want to speak to her."

Mrs. Bundy bustled off, and soon introduced Millicent into the little back parlour, where the doctor was awaiting her.

"Sit down," he said, with a keen, rapid glance, while both his voice and manner betrayed agitation. "I have a question or two to ask you, but you are not bound to answer me, unless you please. Only one thing I will beg of you—say nothing but the truth."

"I never do, sir," replied Millicent.

"I believe it—you are a good girl, I know—very good, coming from where you do, and I only wonder to find you so. I must tell you, too, that you did quite right this morning not to inform the magistrate who was the mother of this infant. It would have been cruel and wrong to betray her, and I

saw you would rather have suffered punishment yourself."

"That I would, sir, with all my heart."

"I will prevent your being endangered again, for we will forfeit the bail. And now our object must be to avert all suspicion from the mother—the weak, unfortunate mother—who, unless I am greatly mistaken, is one I have known for many years. You see, then, how anxious I must feel, before any further steps are taken, to ascertain if I am right. That is why I ask you to tell me her name."

"I can't do that, sir. I know all you say is right, and for her good, but I made her my promise not to tell on her, and I never will."

"But I tell you I am her friend—the friend of her childhood, of her mother," said Mr. Thornhill, testily. "I do not put the question from curiosity, but that I may be guided in what I do—that I may not be plodding and working in the dark."

"Then, may-be, she'll tell you herself, sir. I don't like to deny you, seein' how good

you've been to me; but I wouldn't do it for the world."

"This is sheer obstinacy," said Mr. Thornhill, pacing the room impatiently.—Then, suddenly resuming his seat, he added, "Listen to me. The night before last you were removed from the colliery in Mr. Belwood's carriage, and conveyed to his house. There you were placed in bed by the housekeeper, and left asleep. Now, when and how did you quit the house?"

Millicent made no reply.

"I can tell you," resumed Thornhill. "You came out by the flower-garden gate, opening into the lane; for I discovered, by accident, from the gardener, that the key was found in it next morning—a circumstance he fortunately ascribes to his own negligence. Well, you passed up the lane to the churchyard, where, about two o'clock, you were discovered by the man who gave evidence against you to-day. Was it not so?"

"You're puttin' me on trial again, sir. I own to havin' been in the churchyard."

"And the child you were interring was newly-born—had, in fact, been brought out of the garden gate, from Belwood House, and was wrapped in an India shawl, which, as I know, belonged to a lady living there; for it was presented to her by me. So, you see, putting all these facts together, with some I noticed before, I do not require to be told who the mother was."

"Then, if you be her friend, sir, with your good heart, I'm sure you'll pity her," replied Millicent, with an appealing look.

"You are a strange person," said Thornhill, thoughtfully, and in a more gentle tone. "And yet, perhaps, I ought, after all, to commend rather than reprove you. I know my conjecture is but too true; and your resolute silence, after so much has been said and done to wrest your secret from you, proves that, if the affair should be pushed any further, there is no fear of your betraying confidence. But we must remove you from the neighbourhood. Would you like to leave your present mode of life, and go to service?"

"Oh, yes! yes!" cried Millicent. "I'd work ever so, sir—I'd do anything, if I could only get out of the pit. I'm so frightened goin' down the shaft, holdin' on by the chain, and sometimes, when I come on weaker than common, I could almost leave go, and drop to the bottom. Then, the headways be so cruel damp; and sittin' all day in the dark, without one to say a word to, except once in a way, when a bandsman goes by with tubs, is so lonesome—so dreadful lonesome! Oh, sir! if you would take me into your service, please!"

"I will get you into a better service than mine, my poor girl. A lady wrote to me only yesterday, mentioning that she had just lost her maid, who had been with her many years; and if the place is not yet filled up, I will beg her to take you. I am going to Belwood House now, but I will write about it directly I come back, and, meanwhile, Mrs. Bundy shall take care of you. Have no fear. Something or other shall be done for you."

He stepped into the hall, and exchanged a

few words with the worthy old housekeeper; then took up his hat, and passed out of the front door. The goodly four-wheel was still in attendance; and jumping in, he was borne off at Speedwell's most furious pace.

After a brief interval, he reached the gate of Belwood House, whence a drive swept up to the mansion. Inquiring for Miss Helen, he learnt that she was slightly indisposed, and had not yet left her room.

"It's my opinion, sir," continued Miss Helen's maid, who had been summoned to answer his inquiry, "that my young lady is worse than she thinks—she looks so deadly pale, and seems so weak, like. If you could, sir, I'd be very glad if you'd just step up to her room, and see her."

"I shall be much better satisfied to do so," replied Thornhill.

He followed up the stairs to Helen's chamber, entering with a noiseless step, after directing the servant to give notice of his approach.

Her eyes rose languidly as he came for-

ward, though with a wistful glance, while her wan and colourless face, almost buried in the pillow, wore a look of suffering no language could describe. As he bent down to speak to her, she put forth her hand, and he saw that her purpose was to show, in such a manner as to be seen only by himself, that one white, taper finger wore a wedding-ring.

The doctor's eyes beamed satisfaction at this discovery, indicating how perfectly he understood her, though, as he again glanced at her face, the expression changed for one of deep anxiety. He said a few words in a low tone, so as to reach only her own ear; and then, turning to the Abigail, pronounced her to be in a high fever, adding, that she must be kept very quiet, and that he would send a woman used to the sick-room, and on whom he could depend, to wait upon her. So saying, he turned away and left the room.

He did not forget to send the nurse; and very seasonable were her services. After a few hours, Helen became delirious, and for days continued insensible, raving of events

which the doctor's precaution, in providing an attendant he could confide in, prevented from reaching the household. For some time, however, a greater calamity threatened; and more than once, in spite of unremitted attention, and every relief the doctor's art could supply, life seemed ebbing from that fragile, sinking frame. At length, skill and care again raised her up, but it was only as a wreck on the waters.

CHAPTER IX.

A MONTH elapsed before Helen was able to quit her chamber. In the interim, an event had happened of great importance to the family, in the death of Mr. Belwood, senior. Charles Belwood, however, still remained in London, and a letter was received, stating that he would not return for several weeks.

One morning, Helen was seated in a sunny chamber, looking out on the flower garden, endeared by so many innocent and happy hours, when the door opened, and Mr. Thornhill entered. It was the first time they had met alone since her illness; and a burning flush spread over Helen's face, as the moment

so often dreaded, when she could no longer shun explanation, now actually arrived.

It was some minutes before the doctor approached the delicate topic.

"You are better to-day, Helen," he said, at length. "Will you be able to speak on a subject I am most anxious to hear about, but have thought too agitating to mention before."

Helen murmured an inaudible reply.

"You must be aware, my dear girl, that it is out of love for you that I interfere—from a sincere, earnest desire for your welfare," resumed the doctor. "I have not come to pry into your affairs, and force myself into your confidence, from mere curiosity; nor is it my wish to precipitate unpleasant revelations. But time presses, Helen. We may expect your cousin Charles to return home every day, and the death of your uncle, most probably without a will—at least, without making any provision for you—materially alters your position. If you are a wife, it will be ne-

cessary to seek another home. If you are *not*——"

"Oh! I am, I am!—a true, lawful wife," cried Helen, startled into energy by his abrupt interrogation. "Do not judge me harshly," she continued, burying her face in her hands. "You, dear Mr. Thornhill, who have watched over me so long, fostered me as a child, and counselled me as a woman—you must not desert me now, in my extreme necessity."

"It is because I will not desert you—because I will see you righted, and, if I can, justified, that I am here. But it is essential, Helen, that you should be explicit with me, knowing what I do—for I know *all.*"

"ALL!" echoed Helen, recoiling, her cheek white as death.

"Not all, strictly speaking, perhaps," pursued Thornhill, resolving, both from a desire to spare her feelings, and from fear of alarming her, not to reveal the incident of Millicent's arrest, "but a singular chain of cir-

cumstances has come to my knowledge, which no one but yourself can clear up. Do you ever remember having seen one of the colliery girls, named Millicent Rennel?"

"Yes," gasped Helen. "She has told——"

"No," interrupted Thornhill; "not a word —she has not said a syllable, either to me or any one else, of what passed between you; but still I have been able, from something that casually transpired, in spite of her caution and fidelity, to gain an inkling of it. Now do not be frightened. I mention the fact that you may conceal nothing from me —that you may tell me unreservedly how you stand, and so enable me to befriend you."

"What is this you say?" murmured Helen, regarding him wildly, as if her senses had wandered. "Did you not speak of Millicent Rennel, one of the colliery girls?"

"Yes; I say you have nothing to apprehend from her. I have rewarded her for the service she rendered you, whatever it was,

and, to prevent any further embarrassment, removed her out of the neighbourhood."

"Oh, thank you! thank you!" returned the young lady, with an hysterical burst of tears.

"Come, come, Helen, do not give way thus," resumed Thornhill, much affected. "Compose yourself, my dear girl, and face the danger boldly, if there is any. Tell me at once the whole of this sad history."

"Would that I might—that I dare," said Helen, shading her face with her handkerchief; "but I am bound by a solemn promise to reveal nothing without my husband's consent. Never till now did I see the dreadful, the fatal tendency of such an engagement; but it was an unavoidable consequence of my marriage."

"Unavoidable?"

"Yes. You know the severe, inflexible character of my uncle, and my marriage, eligible as it is for me, would have been extremely distasteful to him. Indeed, had he discovered

it, he would have discarded me; and, unhappily, my ruin would have involved another's."

"And that other," said the doctor, looking up, as if a sudden light had broken in upon him, "is——"

"Oh! do not say—if you suspect, if you know, do not mention him. Wait only a few days. My uncle's death has, I hope, rendered further concealment unnecessary, and when you hear my tale, you will have no reason to reproach me."

"I do not, nor will I reproach you, my dear child, or even press you any more on a subject so painful, since such is your wish. But remember, Helen, whatever may be the end, you will command the same sympathy, the same affection from me; and remember, also, that I enjoyed the friendship—the perfect confidence of your mother."

"I will! I will!" said Helen, pressing his hand, as if she were indeed his child.

Before Thornhill could say anything further, they were interrupted by the entrance of

Charles Belwood, whose soiled and tumbled dress showed that he had but just arrived.

"Charles !" cried Helen, hastening to meet him.

Belwood, to judge from his looks, was quite astonished at this display of affection.—"Well !" he answered, coldly. "Ha ! Thornhill ! is that you?" And he glanced uneasily from one to the other.

"Yes, I have called to see Helen," replied Thornhill, a little embarrassed. "We did not expect you to-day."

"I have returned sooner than I intended. But what are you looking so dreadfully blank about, doctor ? We've had no more calamities, I hope ?"

"Why, I have been alarmed about Helen, as I wrote and told you; but the danger has gone by now, if she only takes care. You must keep her very quiet, and I will come in again by-and-by." So saying, the doctor rose, and, with an abrupt good morning, bustled off.

There was a moment's pause, and the

young wife stood, with downcast eyes and heaving heart, trembling before her husband.

"What a fool you do make of yourself, Helen!" exclaimed Belwood. "You were very nearly flying out before that old bore, as if you are always to keep up such school-girl raptures."

"I am very sorry, Charles, since you are vexed about it," replied Helen, tremulously; "but I was so glad to see you, and——"

"Oh! that's enough about it; don't go into the heroics, pray; for, after we have once seen Rachel, no performance of that kind is endurable. But what is this story about the child, hinted in your letter? You haven't been such a spoon as to trust any one, have you?"

"I mentioned to you about Millicent Rennel, dear Charles. I could not help *that*, you know."

"Of course, not. Women can never help anything, or do anything, except make mischief. But what has become of this girl? You have bribed her well, I hope?"

"I promised to reward her, but——"

"But you haven't! I declare, Helen, you are a perfect Mrs. Green. It is fortunate the girl is a kind of character, or your promise would not be thought much of; but you've taken care to keep her about you, I presume? You could not, of course, be such a confirmed idiot as to let her out of the house?"

"Unfortunately I have not seen her since, dear Charles. Do not be angry, for she never returned."

"Never returned? Nonsense!"

"She did not, indeed, Charles; and I have just learnt from Mr. Thornhill, who appears to have known her for some time, that he has sent her out of the neighbourhood."

Belwood sprang from his seat, as if stung by an adder.

"What has Thornhill to do with her?" he cried, with a fierce look, that seemed to penetrate to his wife's heart. "I trust you have not perjured yourself, and made that busy fool the confidant of my affairs?"

"You know I would not break my promise.

But pray, pray be kinder to me. It will break my heart, if you speak to me so severely."

Belwood uttered an exclamation of impatience; but the poor young creature, gathering courage from her desperate situation, and the thought that he was still her most natural protector, would not be repelled, and with a timid, imploring look, she sat down on a cushion at his feet. Vain effort to recal his extinct affection! he seemed to have forgotten she was in existence.

"Charles," she said, at length, in a voice full of emotion.

"Well?"

"Forgive me, dear Charles; but I thought —you know, it was agreed between us—that, as soon as you became independent of your father, our marriage should be avowed. Now his death——"

"Prevents it—yes, prevents it," said Belwood, vehemently. "I know what I am saying. What would the world think, if I stood up now, before my father is well in his

grave, and trumpeted forth a clandestine marriage, which he would never have sanctioned? I am not in such a hurry to own you, be assured. You are nothing to boast of, that I should forfeit character, connexions, and everything else, just to make it known you are my wife. But you don't care, so long as you are gratified. You want to drag me to it—to goad me on, be the result what it may."

"No, no, I do not. Only be kind to me, Charles—only let me still retain your love!"

"Oh! stuff!" cried Belwood, snatching up his travelling-cap. "I'm quite sick and weary of so much of it!"

And, with these words, he flung out of the room.

CHAPTER X.

It was about nine o'clock in the morning, as Dr. Thornhill's male servant, Tom Crooks, who fulfilled the multifarious duties of groom, butler, gardener, and medicine-carrier in the establishment, stood at his master's gate, looking with might and main up the road. Every now and then he was hailed from behind by Mrs. Bundy, who appeared for a moment at the open door to inquire, something after the fashion of Mrs. Bluebeard, if he saw anything coming.

"Yeez, here be a mon wi' a pig," said Tom, after repeated answers in the negative; "and a bad, ill-grained brute he be, I sup-

pose, for he ha' snapped a stout wand over 'un already."

"But the coach, Muster Tom? D'ye see the coach?"

"Ay, here he be, in right airnest. Be aloive, dame! Here he be!"

"It's come, sir! the coach be come!" cried Mrs. Bundy, rushing across the hall to the little parlour.

The doctor came forth, followed by Millicent; but no longer Millicent the trapper. The unfeminine garb of the mine had given place to a cotton gown, which, homely though it was, imparted new grace to her form; shoes and stockings protected her active little feet; and her soft, bright face looked softer and brighter in a neat bonnet. Clad so humbly, she yet had the step and carriage of a sylph, not acquired from Art, but formed and perfected by the hand of Nature.

"Now mind and be a very good girl, and remember all I have told you," said Dr.

Thornhill; "and here is something to keep in your pocket."

Millicent's eyes glistened, as with a kind, cordial smile, he placed a sovereign in her hand.

"Now, come, Milly, make haste, my dear," said Mrs. Bundy, with eyes full of tears, for she had had time to become excellent friends with her. "Here it be! Here be the coach!"

And there, indeed, it was—the Tally-Ho itself! with its four steaming horses, raising quite a fog round the coach, and appearing, by their restlessness, to consider the momentary stoppage a dead loss of time, not to be recovered by any amount of racing. The rosy-faced coachman, perched aloft like a king, seemed of the same opinion, and called out lustily, "Now, then!" handling his ribands with the impatience of Jehu. The passengers effected a rapid extemporary survey of the premises, including the Doctor, Mrs. Bundy, and Crooks, while the Guard,

cased in a shapeless overcoat, apparently cut down from a watchman's, politely assisted Millicent to mount behind, and then tossed her trim, paper-covered trunk on the coach-roof, as if it were not the most precious trunk in the world. In a moment more, he cried out "Right" to the coachman, and the vehicle dashed off, while the guard's horn rang forth, in a triumphant flourish, "The Lass of Richmond Hill."

Millicent could scarcely believe that it was all real—that she was not dreaming! The change in her situation was so decided, the circumstances surrounding her so novel, her prospect of the future so bright, that heart and mind and thoughts were bewildered, and she could not bring herself to comprehend such startling marvels. But it was no illusion! The fresh, free breeze played on her face, deepening its bloom, heightening its animation. The coach rolled on and on, now between vernal meads, flanked by hedgerows, sprinkled with many a gay and pleasant blossom; now up a wooded hill,

showing far away the expansive and fruitful lowlands; now through a wood, or a town, or over a common, and everywhere meeting the same reflection of the bright and sunny day.

Nothing could exceed the politeness and attention of the guard, who sat by her side, beguiling the time with recitals of coach accidents, in which he was as strong as in tunes. Here he indicated the exact spot where the mail had been upset; there the Tally-Ho itself had been buried in a snow-drift; a steep descent was famed, in local traditions, for the overthrow of an opposition conveyance, attended with serious loss of life; the sharp angle of a road had been the scene of a collision, where two coaches had fraternised in a fog. These lively narratives were interspersed with solos on the horn, embracing a variety of favourite airs, any-thing but agreeable to the martyred pas-sengers.

They stopped to change horses, which were soon buckled to; and then the guard,

who had rushed into the inn, and come forth again just as briskly, wiping his mouth with a gorgeously-coloured handkerchief, resumed his seat, playing " British Grenadiers."

" Do you object to a weed, young woman?" he said, as soon as they were out of the town.

" Oh, no, sir," answered Millicent; " but I like the flowers best."

The guard gave a stare of astonishment; then smiled. " The colour of grass, I perceive—very strong," he said; " but you won't mind 'bacco, I dare say." And he lit his cigar. " I always has a go of brandy and takes a weed at the Blue Posts, there, as it's a sort of mark to reckon by. Ah! we're goin' along now, I take it! The cattle's fresh, you see, and don't want whip. I should like to see the rail as had beat this, in the way of going it, though I don't say, mind you, as they couldn't do it quicker, but it wouldn't jee the same, I think—not quite! But hold on a little now, young woman, if you please. Just up here, at the corner, it's

reether ticklish, a bit of a twist, like, for the osses, and sometimes people's pitched off the coach. I've been upset there twice myself Once I came on my head—such a bonneter There was two killed, that day. The other time—— but, whew! hold tight, young woman! here we are!"

But no accident happened; and, three hours afterwards, as the day began to decline, Millicent arrived safe at her destination.

The porter came out of an old-fashioned lodge to receive her; and taking her slender baggage on his shoulder, led the way round a smooth and spacious lawn to the mansion —an antique Elizabethan edifice, of red brick, which he entered by a back way opening on the housekeeper's room.

The housekeeper—a demure-looking old lady, of very comfortable appearance, was according to Millicent's notions, dressed so handsomely, that the poor girl took her for the mistress, and, while scarcely daring to raise her eyes, dropped a low curtsey, pro-

ducing a most favourable and propitiatory impression.

"You are the person sent by Dr. Thornhill, I suppose?" said the housekeeper, smiling.

"Yes, ma'am," answered Millicent.

"Well, sit down and rest yourself a little. I am going up-stairs, and will tell my mistress you have come."

Her mistress! Millicent felt a strange, irrepressible awe creep over her. With such a great personage for servant, what must the lady herself be!

She had time enough to imagine, for when, after a considerable interval, the housekeeper returned, she ordered refreshments for her, though the young girl, agitated by a thousand expectations, had no inclination to eat. At last, a bell rang, and she was summoned to the presence of her future mistress.

It was curious, as she approached the drawing-room, to observe one so conspicuous among desperate miners for self-possession

and fearlessness, now, under such encouraging and auspicious circumstances, overcome with diffidence; but, in plain truth, the civilising, soul-subduing influence of kindness had touched a deep chord in Millicent's heart, and with the garb of her sex she assumed also its instincts and impulses. On entering the room, a glance showed her the figure of a lady, seated on a couch, but, beyond this, she saw nothing, as her eyes instantly fell, calling a deep and modest blush to her cheek, the best recommendation Nature could furnish.

Mrs. Grantley—for so the lady was named—appeared to be verging on the first downhill of life; and wore those significant emblems of mourning which, though no longer disfigured by weeds, tell the touching tale of widowhood. Her features, in spite of defacing wrinkles, still retained traces of their early beauty, though, as the door opened, her eye turned on Millicent with a cold, haughty gaze, throwing over her face a strangely severe and even repelling expression. But,

ere this settled itself, it was broken by a look of patient and tender sorrow, vanishing and reappearing, like a sunbeam gliding through foliage; and surprise and admiration succeeded, as, on a second glance, the modest appearance and singular beauty of Millicent appealed at once to her heart.

"Dr. Thornhill tells me you have never been in service before," she said, after a moment's silence. "Have you been accustomed to work at home for your mother?"

"I've got no mother, ma'am, nor no father," replied Millicent, in her sweet, winning voice. "I've always wrought in the pit, ma'am."

"The pit! What pit?"

"Squire Belwood's coal-pit, ma'am."

"Impossible, surely!—so delicate as you appear to be, so unlike one used to such dreadful work!"

"I'll do any work, ma'am, if you'll please to take me. I'll soon learn the way, ma'am."

"I have no doubt of it, and shall engage you, certainly; for I wish to have a girl

whom I can train in my own manner. What is your age?"

"I be fifteen, ma'am."

"So I should have thought. How long is it since you lost your father and mother?"

"I don't know about my father, ma'am but it's years ago since I lost my mother—almost as long as I can mind."

"You do remember her, though?"

"What! my mother, ma'am?" replied Millicent, with sudden energy, while her eyes filled with tears, "Oh! yes, yes! I'll always remember my mother."

"That is right," said Mrs. Grantley, in a kind, gentle tone. "You may go to the housekeeper now; and when I want you, I will ring your bell."

The bell did not ring that night.

CHAPTER XI.

EVERY morning, at nine o'clock, the inmates of Winstone Manor-house assembled in the great hall, where the curate of the parish, officiating as Mrs. Grantley's chaplain, read family prayers, and the appointed portion of Scripture. Clearly and solemnly his lips pronounced the undying words, amidst the reverent attention of the household; and then, with one mind and one voice, mistress and servant drew near the Almighty together.

All this was a mystery to Millicent. It is true, the image of the Creator, by an unerring and wondrous ordinance, is stamped

on every soul that comes into the world; and even the stolid savage, in his wilderness of moral and physical debasement, catches at times a faint and momentary glimpse of the Pillar of Fire. There was something, too, in Millicent's heart, but it was a shadow —a dark, gloomy, wandering cloud, without form and void.

Not comprehending, then, what was done, she did not know how to conduct herself; and her imitation of others was so awkward, that it attracted the notice of Mrs. Grantley, who, when prayers were over, retiring from the hall, bade Millicent attend her.

"I observed your hesitation at prayers," she said, as soon as they were alone. "Remembering how you have been employed hitherto, I cannot expect that you should be accustomed to join in family worship; but I trust you always say your prayers in private."

"I haven't yet, ma'am," answered Millicent, with a look of perplexity; "but if you'll set some one to show me how, I'll be very glad to."

Mrs. Grantley gazed at her in astonishment.

"What do you mean?" she said, in agitated tones. "Is it possible that, with your quick intelligence, you can have come to such an age without learning to pray! Do you not know God."

"Iv'e heard the men swearin' about him, ma'am, but I ain't ever seen him myself."

"You shock me—you frighten me," said Mrs. Grantley. "Can there really be such ignorance in England, where knowledge is so diffused? Oh! don't cry, poor child, for I am not angry with you. Dr. Thornhill prepared me for finding you uninformed, though not to such an extent; and I shall feel satisfaction in giving you instruction."

"Thank you kindly, ma'am," murmured Millicent.

"You say you have never seen God," said Mrs. Grantley. "Look!" And she pointed at the sun, arrayed in its brightest effulgence. "Nay, look again! Why do you turn away your eyes?"

" It blinds me, ma'am."

" Well, that light, which pours its beams over the world from end to end, and which you cannot even look at, is darkness compared with God. How could you behold Him, when you are dazzled—blinded, you tell me, by one of the lamps before His throne?"

" Oh! no! no! I couldn't, ma'am," said Millicent, masking her eyes with her hand. " No one could!"

" Not really and visibly; for even if such glory could be revealed to sight, the Almighty, who has formed all things, is Himself no form. Yet still he is seen, Millicent, even in His majesty—seen in His wondrous power, in His more wondrous love, mirrored in everything eye can look on. More than all, He is seen in our own selves, made after His image, and, as one of His holy prophets has said, made fearfully and wonderfully."

" Did He make me too, ma'am?" asked Millicent, hesitatingly, as if fearing the idea might be deemed presumptuous.

"Yes, you, and me, and every one—every thing that lives, and everything that is seen, and things not seen. In His sight, too, we are all alike, rich and poor the same—His creatures, His children, provided we love and obey Him."

"How kind! how good!" exclaimed Millicent, yielding to a burst of new and mysterious feeling. "*I* will love, *I* will obey Him, if I can only find out the way."

"With His gracious help, I will show it to you," said Mrs. Grantley, solemnly. "Now, kneel down."

Millicent obeyed; and, with trembling lips, repeated after her those holy and hallowing words, so fervent and yet so simple, so expressive of all our ever-craving wants, so touching in their devotion, reverence, and pious submission, in which the Divine Founder of our faith, to leave nothing in doubt, has taught us how to appeal to our Father in heaven.

The beautiful and matchless prayer was learnt, explained, and comprehended; for

the teacher, animated by the holiest feelings, possessed the right spirit for her pious task, and the pupil was only too eager. And now she was initiated in the first sacred, vital truths of religion, which fell on her young heart like the dew from heaven, opening its latent sympathies, and converting what had been a sealed spring—a dry and sterile desert, into a source of goodness, purity, and virtue.

Mrs. Grantley did not fail to follow up, at other times, the effect produced on this occasion. Surprised at Millicent's fine capacity, won by her gratitude, and charmed by her docile and captivating nature, which seemed to draw life and joy from her very looks, she spent a certain portion of every day in teaching her to read and write. The same success crowned her labours, and no long time elapsed before Millicent, surmounting each intervening impediment, could master a chapter in the Bible.

Meanwhile, an event occurred of more immediate significance, bearing in an equal

degree on her religious welfare. In the village church, where she had now for several weeks attended service, hearing the name of God pronounced, not in profane curses and oaths, but in supplication and thanksgiving—on a Sunday afternoon, in the presence of a congregation of wondering rustics, and under the eye of her kind and beneficent mistress, Millicent received the sacred rite of baptism. With what reverence she heard the solemn exhortation of the Church, read by the impressive voice of the vicar!—how her heart echoed the inspired words of the Psalm!—how meekly and tremblingly her spirit bowed, her heart opened, in mute but ardent adoration, before the dread footstool of her Maker!

Sunbeams poured through the great window of the venerable old church, in a stream of chastened glory to the font, like a halo from heaven; and the face of the young girl, momentarily upturned, with piety and innocence brightening every feature—her superb form, and attitude of devotion—

seemed, in that light and place, the actual impersonation of Faith. And now there was a breathless silence; the consecrated water moistened her forehead; and the minister, in a deep, solemn voice, uttered those mystic and soul-thrilling words—

"I SIGN YOU WITH THE SIGN OF THE CROSS!"

CHAPTER XII.

Mrs. Grantley was not one of those quidnuncs who are always predicting the most grievous social mischief as the inevitable consequence of educating the poor. Her estimate of the amount of information they should acquire extended beyond the Scriptures, which she imagined, though adapted by an all-wise and all-ruling Providence to the meanest understanding, are themselves more clearly comprehended by a mind enlightened. Perhaps, this impression was not natural to one reared in the prejudices and exclusive notions of an ancient house, tracing its ancestry through countless

ages, and possessing, as an inalienable inheritance, the broad lands of half a county. To say truth, the Vavasours—for such was her maiden name—deemed all below their own sphere beings of an inferior creation. They had, in fact, a thorn in their flesh, a taint, a moral leprosy, that clung to them, father and son and daughter, through every generation—pursuing them like a shadow, haunting and ruling them like an evil genius: their inherent, hereditary, besetting characteristic was PRIDE.

This quality, which had waxed with her strength and grown with her growth, had, at length, been combated in Mrs. Grantley's heart by a stronger feeling—a feeling supreme in woman, mastering and controlling every other. After a brief but mighty struggle, it had yielded, in a certain measure, to love. A beauty, an heiress, wooed by nobles, admired and caressed by all, the haughty daughter of the Vavasours descended from her high estate, and contracted a *mesalliance.*

From the moment of her marriage all in-

tercourse, all association with her family was broken off. In their eyes she became lost, dead. Her letters, her petitions for pardon, her tender appeals to their pity, even her professions of repentance — for she had, alas! but too good cause to repent—were either received with contemptuous silence, or returned unopened. The Vavasours were never known to forgive!

How bitter, how poignant the reflection that she had made this sacrifice of home and kindred for an unworthy object! that the idol she had set up in her heart, shrined in her imagination, blessed, worshipped, was a mean and grovelling domestic tyrant! And now came the great tamer—Sorrow, who enters the lions' den of our hearts like a keeper, regardless of the wild, fierce passions, the wolfish selfishness, the savage and insatiable malice, that spring up like beasts of prey to meet him. Who can stand before his rod? Who can resist his iron will?

Years passed; and Mrs. Grantley, abandoned by those who should have soothed

and protected her, cut off from the world, subjected to daily and hourly humiliations, the victim of an ill-starred marriage, self-doomed, self-immolated, learnt a severe and cruel lesson. But the cup was not full, till, with bleeding heart, and agony not to be assuaged, she bent in despair over the bier of her cherished, her only child. A few years more, and she was a widow.

Such was the discipline which subjected the dominant element of Mrs. Grantley's character to its minor but more sterling qualities; and if, at times, her natural haughty spirit did still appear, it was invariably curbed by her acquired one—the spirit of kindness and sensibility. Her eyes had opened to the fact that, whatever might be the worldly differences of fortune, all were endued with the same immortal essence, sprung from the same clay, bound in the same bonds of flesh and blood. She became aware that the accident of hereditary distinction, whether founded on ancient descent, or stately manors, or on high-sounding titles,

was no sign of superior merit, and, of itself, hardly a claim to respect—that the humble, the poor, and the needy, so neglected, and so despised, were fellow-creatures, and even fellow-sufferers. In a word, she learnt her duty.

Millicent's eager desire for knowledge, ready capacity, and rapid progress undoubtedly strengthened Mrs. Grantley's convictions; and as peculiar circumstances almost closed the gulf between mistress and servant, she daily found new pleasure, new enjoyment, in her labour of love, becoming more and more interested in the object of it.

It is wonderful what advances a well-governed intellect may achieve by exertion, in a space of time incredibly short. Ever on the watch for information, devouring books, keeping her faculties under strict control, and observing with eager vigilance the words and discourse of Mrs. Grantley and her visitors, Millicent made astonishing progress,

every moment becoming more polished. And did this deteriorate her usefulness? Did it, as the vulgar clap-trap goes, make her discontented with her station? Far from it; for they who are taught to respect themselves know how to respect others. It is the illiterate, the ignorant, the depraved, who envy the fortune and position of their superiors.

Twelve months flew by, and, in that time, who so happy as Millicent? Whether following Mrs. Grantley to the village with her bible and prayer-book, to extend their divine support to those who, infirm alike in mind and body, would otherwise have been devoid of consolation; or carrying little dainties to some perishing invalid—whether attending her in pious and benevolent missions, in the routine of her chamber, or in her favourite flower-garden, Millicent was equally blithe, attentive, and contented. At the side of her loved mistress, indeed, she had nothing left to wish for.

But now a cloud was to come over this flood of sunshine. It was not always that Mrs. Grantley required assistance in her gentle ministry, and, on such occasions, adhering to the precept of the poet, she preferred to fulfil it unattended. After one of these visitations she returned home indisposed; but it was not till the following morning that a necessity appeared for calling in the village surgeon, when, to the consternation of the household, it was discovered that she was suffering from a malignant fever.

The disease was infectious; but, though warned by the surgeon, Millicent, dismissing all thought for herself, insisted on her right to remain the sole attendant of her mistress, declining every assistance.

From morning till night, from night till morning, she lingered at the bedside with the tenderness of filial love, rarely closing her eyes, and, even then, starting at the

slightest sound. No hand but hers could soothe the sufferer's pillow; no eye so anxiously watch over her; no other voice answer her inquiries. But all appeared to be in vain. The inexorable disorder, triumphing alike over the nurse's unremitted attention and the surgeon's skill, twined more desperately round its victim; resistance grew more and more feeble; and the grim shadow of death, so long hovering nigh, now, at length, seemed to darken the chamber.

"This must be the last night," said the doctor, to Millicent, after feeling the sufferer's pulse.

"Oh, sir, is there no hope?" asked Millicent, falteringly.

"I have done all that can be done by man. She has a severe struggle before her, and I am afraid her strength is spent."

Slowly and mournfully he spoke, as a judge might pronounce the awful and inevitable sentence; and Millicent, pale, trembling,

speechless, looked as though it were her own. It was taking from her more than life—far, far more—all that she valued in the wide, desolate world.

Again she is keeping solitary watch. Mrs. Grantley, after a violent and protracted paroxysm, had become tranquil, and soft, low breathing announced sleep—so still, so hushed, it might almost be taken for death. Millicent fixed a startled gaze upon her, as if she feared that the semblance was more than imaginary; but soon she saw that it was not so. The lamp of life still burnt, though feebly, and gloomy as the prospect was, she need not yet despair.

The affections, notwithstanding their great and multiform energies, must, be circumstances what they may, eventually yield to the wants and infirmities of the body; and despite her untiring vigilance, Millicent's eyes involuntarily closed. It was not sleep, but a lethargy, leaving her conscious of her situation, and of the familiar objects around.

A mournful vestige of the real was impressed on her imagination, colouring and heightening all its dreary, disordered fantasies. She was entranced, spell-bound, inert as to mere motion, but in mind and feeling awake. Thus she still watched by the bedside of her mistress, when, looking up, as if in obedience to some mysterious and resistless instinct, she saw the hangings move slowly aside, and admit a shadowy phantom, like an arm, mantled in mist, from which a dart was levelled at Mrs. Grantley, who moved uneasily in her sleep. Struck with wild terror, Millicent started up, and, lo! it was a dream.

Before she could compose herself, there was a rustling at the chamber door, and the surgeon entered.

"I thought I had better come in again to-night," he said. "But you look terrified. Is she dead?"

Millicent, paralysed by the inquiry, could make no answer.

He stepped softly up to the bed, carefully

shading the night-light, so as not to disturb Mrs. Grantley, if she were still asleep. As he turned again, his eye met Millicent's.

"The worst is past," he said, "or she could not sleep so calmly. This will refresh her, and I now think she may recover."

Millicent uttered an exclamation of joy, her eyes filling with tears.

"You may lie down, now, without the least apprehension," resumed the surgeon, kindly, "and I beg you will; for if you are not careful, you will be very likely, after so much anxiety and fatigue, to take the fever yourself. Now, mind what I tell you, and go to bed." And bidding her good night, he went away.

His hopeful anticipations were realised; for morning found Mrs. Grantley with restored consciousness, and manifestly increasing strength. Looking up, she encountered the fond gaze of Millicent.

"Is it you, child?" she said; "and your face so pale, so worn?"

"Oh, but I am very well, ma'am," answered Millicent, her eyes brimming over; "and so glad to see you better."

"Ah! I have been in great pain—very great, and for so long a time, too. I recollect now, just as if it were a dream. And you have been with me all the time, have you not, Millicent?"

Millicent only smiled—a soft, melancholy smile, full of tenderness and affection.

"I have seen you," resumed Mrs. Grantley; "I have felt you were there, watching, soothing, and attending me. It is you who have flitted about my bed, doing everything I required, supplying all my wants; and I can see, poor child, by your altered appearance, you have totally neglected yourself."

"No, no, ma'am. You have provided for me so bountifully, I could not want for anything."

" But are you not afraid of taking the fever, Millicent?" said Mrs. Grantley, with a look of solicitude. "Indeed, you have done wrong—very wrong, to incur this risk."

" I never thought of the risk, ma'am. I've been so much among fevers ever since I could know what they were, that they seem as nothing to me; and what I've done cheerfully for the girls in the coal-pit, I ought to do for you, ma'am. It has been such a satisfaction, such a consolation to me, and now I am so happy that I can speak to you."

" And I am unhappy, Millicent, to see you so ill: therefore, if you wish to hold your post of nurse any longer, you will instantly go to your own room, and take some rest. Nay, I will not hear a word of excuse. You must go."

Millicent, weary and exhausted though she was, would still gladly have remained. but could not venture to disobey her mis-

tress. Besides, her mind was relieved of a weight of apprehension, a burden too great to be borne; and soothed, comforted, cheered, full of confiding hope, and a grateful sense of the overruling watchfulness of Heaven, no long time elapsed before she was asleep.

A few days brought back to her cheeks their natural look of health and vivacity. In the mean time there was a gradual but marked improvement in Mrs. Grantley, who progressed every day, under Millicent's renewed care, in the same favourable manner; and, fortunately, nothing occurred to retard her recovery.

CHAPTER XII.

Happy to Millicent was the day when, for the first time after her illness, she again attended Mrs. Grantley to the flower-garden. The tuneful voices of a thousand birds, echoing, in mellifluous concord, from every tree, were not more jocund, more melodious, than the unheard song of her heart. And everything was of a character to increase and heighten enjoyment. Nature wore her brightest dress, radiant with the opening glories and sparkling verdure of spring. The air, though warm as summer, had the bracing freshness of the season ; and the

budding trees and flowers yielded their first perfume. There, they could realise the sweet picture of Thomson—

> At once arrayed
> In all the colours of the flushing year,
> By Nature's swift and secret-working hand,
> The garden glows, and fills the liberal air
> With lavish fragrance: while the promis'd fruit
> Lies yet a little embryo unperceiv'd,
> Within its crimson folds. . . . .
> And see the country far diffus'd around,
> One boundless blush, one white empurpl'd show'r
> Of mingled blossoms.

"How bright, how charming everything is!" exclaimed Mrs. Grantley, who, after protracted confinement to the sick-room, had a keener appreciation of the scene.

"It is, indeed, very beautiful," replied Millicent. "But can you enjoy it like me, ma'am?"

"Why should I not?"

"Because you have never been shut up in the earth as I have, only seeing the sky at night. It is like a new life and new world to me."

"Poor girl! But why do you think of those days of trouble now?"

"I cannot help it, ma'am, when everything is so different, and reminds me by contrast of what was. You have taught me, too, to read nature like a book, and I find it one in which every day turns over a fresh page, revealing something I had not observed before."

"That is because you are always searching for knowledge, Millicent. There are probably few people in that pit of darkness you have escaped from, with the same rectitude of feeling—few who possess your capacity and intelligence."

"You think too kindly of me, ma'am," said Millicent, her cheek mantling with pleasure. "There were many there with better abilities than I have, which they were ever trying to improve. I have often thought since, what clever men they would make if they had only known how to read."

"It is a scandal on our Christian character

that they do not; but, till you made these sad revelations, I had no idea that such ignorance existed in England. That mine of yours was a rich one, after all, if it contained such materials. But do you remember the little poem I gave you yesterday?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am. The 'Elegy in a Country Churchyard.'"

"Well, there is one stanza in it often quoted, so as to have become almost hacknied, but which our conversation forcibly illustrates:—

> Full many a gem of purest rays serene
> The dark, unfathom'd caves of ocean bear;
> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

I wish we all remembered those lines more frequently."

In this manner they continued to converse, growing every moment more attached, more intimate; and Mrs. Grantley began to regard Millicent less as a servant, than an humble companion and friend.

That night, it was long before Millicent could settle to sleep. Fancy still lingered on the past day, recalling the words and looks of her mistress, so full of kindness, of esteem, of affection. And such thoughts, grasping and realising her fondest hopes, were, in the soothing silence of night, inspiration to a heart like hers, so profound in its emotions, and predestined to love and be loved.

Suddenly she was startled by loud screams and outcries, from every quarter, when she found the room full of smoke, and a strong suffocating odour, leaving no doubt of fire. Opening the door, she distinguished several figures hurrying down the stairs, though almost invisible in smoke, which, bursting from the rooms below, ascended in dense volumes, while her ear caught the prolonged, flapping noise created by flames. To throw a shawl over her shoulders was the work of an instant, and then, reckless

what became of herself, she flew to seek her mistress.

Mrs. Grantley, aroused by the alarm, had quitted her bed, but had been unable to make out the door.

"Dear mistress, are you still here?" cried Millicent, rushing in. "Oh! come with me quick, or we shall be too late."

"You must help me, or I cannot move," answered Mrs. Grantley. "My knees totter with terror. Oh! do not leave me."

"Never! never!" cried Millicent.

Her arm, steady as in her most tranquil moments, and nerved with a strength and resolution not its own, circled Mrs. Grantley's waist, wrapping a blanket over her, while her hands clasped hers, and almost carried her into the passage.

It was like entering a dense, scorching, fiery cloud. To breathe was impossible; and the black masses of smoke closed and sealed their eyes, already blinded by

the darkness. But Millicent, bent only on one object, possessed and absorbed by one thought, drew her mistress along, though she felt her grow heavier at each step. A rush of hot air intimated that they had reached the stairs. There were only two flights to descend, when a window opening on a balcony would, she hoped, enable them to gain the garden.

"Dear, dear mistress, bear up," said Millicent. "Muster all your strength, or we are lost."

A pressure of the hand was Mrs. Grantley's reply, and, exhausted though she was—terrified, stifled—she did make an effort to descend the stairs. But to push through that seething furnace, that gulf of fire and fog, required superhuman strength; and she felt herself paralysed. Her whole weight fell on Millicent, who, thus heavily burdened, and suffering acutely, could only move step by step, while every moment ren-

dered the danger more and more imminent. They heard the devouring element raging around with the roar and fury of a boiling caldron, while the fall of ponderous beams snapping like thunder, the incessant crash of fragments, even the trembling of the stairs beneath, proclaimed its irresistible ascendancy. The massive walls cracked like shells, and the carved oaken banister, though not yet reached by the flames, blistered Millicent's hand. But now half the descent was achieved, and they stood on the lower floor.

At this instant, a bright, thin vapour shot like a rocket through the thick mass of smoke; there was a ruddy and intensely vivid glare, and a whirl of flames leaped up the opening. The fire had caught the stairs; it flew in wreaths round the rails and balustrade, and rushed, lava-like, up the walls, while the passage below blazed, and eddied, and thundered, like the crater of a volcano.

Millicent shrank back appalled, though still holding her mistress, who seemed, by her utter helplessness, no longer conscious of her situation. Millicent felt her own senses reeling; and her arms were so strained, that if she had not laid Mrs. Grantley down, to give them a moment's respite, the living load would have dropped from them. Before she could resume her progress, a fierce blast of fire leaping out from the vortex like a winged serpent, made her stagger aside, and she almost fell through a doorway. Catching at the wall to support herself, her hand struck a window, which she threw up, and a rush of fresh air revived her.

She paused an instant, just to recover breath; and then, with a despairing effort, darted back to the staircase. It was now one vast sheet of fire, a burning lake, a molten, whirling sea, with waves of lightning; yet, amidst the splitting walls and

crackling timbers, falling in a shower of ashes, it was impossible to see where she stepped. Where now were the upper stairs? where was Mrs. Grantley? As she sprang forward, something touched her foot. Her heart, just sinking within her, thrilled with new hope, new life; and, though ready to drop, she felt for the moment the strength of a giant. Stooping, she threw her arms round Mrs. Grantley, and bore her to the window. A shout rose from below—a loud, soaring, soul-stirring shout—like a cry to Heaven. They were seen!

"Dear, brave child, how nobly you have behaved," said Mrs. Grantley, rallied by the refreshing breeze. "And now, after all, we must perish together."

"No, ma'am, no! there is hope for us yet. The people have got a ladder, and are coming to our assistance. We shall be saved!"

A dozen sturdy and resolute men, all eager

to interpose, brought on the ladder, and despite the flames pouring from the lower windows, planted it against the house.

" Now, dear mistress, let me raise you on the window," said Millicent, " and I can then help you down."

" And what will you do, Millicent ?"

" Oh, I can reach the ladder easily. There, that is it! Now you are safe."

A stalwart rustic, who had sprung up the ladder, caught the terrified lady in his arms, and Millicent then got out herself, descending without difficulty, and alighting unhurt on the ground.

CHAPTER XIII.

Millicent and Mrs. Grantley found shelter at the Vicarage, whither, as the nearest suitable refuge, they were instantly carried, covered with a heap of cloaks, and attended by its hospitable master.

The Reverend Martin Alderson was a widower, by no means disposed, it would seem, from the long lapse he had allowed to occur, to take on himself again the silken yoke of matrimony. Indeed, he was in all things cautious, calculating, prudent—a follower of the saints, but keeping his powder dry. *In* church and *out*, as priest and as

citizen, he uniformly maintained the same reserve, had the same unerring eye to temporal and personal advantage. Weak in doctrine, a disciple of the wild creed of Geneva, he yet had the sound discretion to keep his heterodox opinions to himself; and, while languishing after the New Jerusalem, clung but too fondly to the flesh-pots of Egypt. Not the tracts, but the signs of the times—the politicians, the ruling powers—were his text-book, his study. This taste he had acquired with his Hebrew at Cambridge—imbibed as the very sucking milk of Alma Mater; and after figuring as the most incorrigible Tuft of his college, had come out, at last, under the fostering auspices of a marquis, with a Benjamin's share of the loaves and fishes. Yet, with all this, he was not without piety, trimming and worldly though it was, or even charity and good-nature. He had a Samaritan's love of alms; his duties, so far as an onerous burden of benefices

would permit, were conscientiously discharged; and, in solemnising the services of the Church, perhaps his only serious dereliction was, that he discarded the Psalms of David, with their glorious expressions, their grand and elevating associations, for trumpery Calvinistic hymns, outraging the majesty of religion with their profane, audacious, and scandalous absurdity.

On the morning following the fire, Mrs. Grantley, who had sustained no injury beyond a slight cold, met the vicar in the breakfast-room.

"I am glad of an opportunity of having a little conversation with you, Mr. Alderson," she said; "for I have something on my mind, in which I desire to have the benefit of your assistance. But, to prevent misconstruction, I must first open a page in my history full of melancholy recollections."

"Then do not revert to it, dear madam," returned the vicar. "Whatever your pur-

pose may be, it will, I am sure, bear its own justification."

"I have had too much experience of your friendship, Mr. Alderson, to suppose for a moment that I should be misinterpreted by you; but, perhaps, one who has so long been my neighbour ought not to be ignorant of these circumstances. You remember when I first came to reside here?"

"Perfectly. I have grown an old man since, but twenty years have fallen lightly on you."

"Is it so long? Yet time spent in undisturbed tranquillity, after so much grief, so much suffering, may well seem to have flown." And as the memory of those sad, weary years came back upon her, the widow's eyes filled with tears.

"Are not these things better forgotten, dear madam?" said Mr. Alderson, soothingly. "Trouble, you know, is our common heritage, and though you may have had to

endure much, you must remember that He who tempers the wind to the lamb has still been very mindful of you."

"He has," said Mrs. Grantley, with a reverent inclination; "and I am unthankful, unthinking, to repine." She paused a moment, and when she spoke, it was in a voice tremulous with emotion. "You probably never heard, Mr. Alderson, that I made what is called an imprudent marriage—a marriage which had not the sanction of my family?"

"I confess a rumour of such a thing has reached me; but how, I can't recollect. Indeed, rumours come, like the wind, one knows not whence, and as such I allow them to pass. But I interrupt you."

"Not in the least. Long as was my term of endurance, of trial—a few words will suffice for my history—so far, I mean, as it need be told. But I will utter no more complaints. And true it is, as I know, as I have

experienced — out of evil the Father of Mercy brings good, as out of darkness, light. Often He chastens in pity, even in love."

"So often, madam, that after a prolonged course of unbroken prosperity, when the spirit becomes deadened, as it were, in the body, making what should be its temple a sepulchre, then those associates of our fall, poverty, adversity, disaster, cruel as they may seem, are like visits from angels. They are the rod of Moses, bringing from the heart a spring of goodness."

"At least, their effect is very salutary. In my own case, I know that affliction made me wiser, more alive to my defects, more sensible of my errors. But these thoughts, though they crowd upon me so thickly, are altogether beside my purpose. I have only to tell you that the breach between me and my nearest relations has never been healed, and this will account for what I have resolved on doing—what, indeed, I must state

distinctly is now necessary to my happiness—to my peace."

"You mean, I presume, a termination of this misunderstanding—a reconciliation?" said Mr. Alderson, gently, as she paused to suppress her emotion.

"That, indeed, I should desire, if I did not know that it was impossible. No! I must seek sympathy, kindness, love, from strangers—from one left like myself, friendless and desolate. Such a one has just done me the greatest service a fellow-creature can render—preserved my life—preserved it at the risk of her own! I need scarcely say I allude to the girl who behaved so nobly last night—Millicent Rennell, my servant, and, from this time, my daughter."

"Am I to understand, dear madam, that you intend to adopt her?" said Mr. Alderson, with a look of surprise.

"Precisely."

Mr. Alderson, as a remote scion of a re-

cently ennobled family, by no means approved of such a project, having very stringent opinions on the subject of caste, which, viewed by him, was an institution of the Medes and Persians, never to be any way altered.

"Since you have had the goodness to let me know your intentions, Mrs. Grantley," he said, after a moment's deliberation, "I would strongly recommend you, before taking so important a step, to consider well whether it will really conduce to what you desire—the young person's happiness. I must confess, for my own part, I think such a complete change in her destiny, such a sudden advancement, is calculated to produce a very mischievous effect upon her; and I venture to counsel you against it."

"Your sentiments, I have no doubt, will be shared by many, when my resolution comes to be known; but, believe me, I have weighed every objection you could urge.

My mind is now made up, and nothing could induce me to alter it."

Mr. Alderson silently inclined his head.

"I am aware these abrupt changes are sometimes attended with danger," pursued Mrs. Grantley; "but, in this case, it may be avoided. It is my intention to send Millicent away, for a short time, to some good school, where, in the society of strangers, girls of her own age, she will soon become accustomed to her new position. And now you have heard all my plans, may I, without further preamble, beg you will assist me to carry them out; and first, as I am unequal to the task myself, communicate them to Millicent?"

"Most certainly; you may command me, dear madam, in any way you please," replied Mr. Alderson, really not sorry, as opposition would be useless, to play such a prominent part in the transaction. "Of course, she is still here?"

"Reckoning on your compliance, I told her to wait for you in the library."

"Then I will go to her at once," said Mr. Alderson. And he quitted the room.

CHAPTER XIV.

About twenty miles from Winstone, in an outskirt of the county town, was a ladies' school, proudly distinguished from all rival establishments by the simple but expressive appellation of "The Misses Jumpsen's." It was a large, detached house, standing in the midst of extensive grounds, and having a very stylish and *bon-ton* appearance, which, as a matter of course, was duly considered in the "terms," though it is but fair to add, that eighty guineas per annum included "everything"—except extras.

The Misses Jumpsen were maiden sisters,

respectively denominated Susan and Jacintha. It was only the latter, however, that was ever addressed by her Christian name, Susan being uniformly spoken of as Miss Jumpsen—an intimation to all whom it might concern, that she claimed to be the eldest miss of her race.

Susan, indeed, though her exact age was a mystery, counted, beyond all doubt, a very serious number of years—say, if a conjecture may be hazarded on so delicate a subject, the verge of forty; and probably this circumstance exercised an effect on her character, which also was very serious. Prim was her appearance—rigid, inflexible—not a fold awry, not a thread ruffled in her dress, not a trace of sensibility in her features. In aspect, as well as in reputation, she was the pattern of propriety, forcibly described by a neighbouring clergyman, the Reverend Firebrass Dobbs, her ghostly oracle and confessor, as an angel upon earth.

Jacintha was of a far different mould, or, rather, was now, while still clinging to youth, what her sister had been; for, truth to say, Jacintha had only reached that mysterious epoch of woman's existence called a certain age. Hope still lingered. No trim cap obscured the glories of her wiry ringlets, though of late grown marvellously scant, and though, moreover, scandal bruited through the school stories of a false topknot. Tongues were not wanting, indeed, to asperse even the bloom on her cheek, soft and delicate as it was; and it was whispered, in circles understood to be well informed, that it evinced a hydrophobian antipathy to water. Her costume, the fruit of Hervey-like meditations, was of a style just expiring, though, in the quick metamorphoses of modern fashion, now deemed rococo; and was made to exhibit a very saucy pair of shoulders, certainly far above mediocrity. Her girlish attire gave colour

to a fine affectation of simplicity, apparently almost infantile, and to a dashing frankness, which, in order to prevent escape, seized your ear by the button, pouring into it all the feigned secrets and fondnesses of the heart. Her own eulogist, she described herself as a fragile being, a moth, a summer flower. And flower she might be, but it was a little faded.

It was to the establishment of these weird sisters, as one bearing the highest repute in the county, that Mrs. Grantley resolved to send Millicent; and after a few letters had effected the necessary treaty, it was arranged that she should set out in charge of Mr. Alderson, who undertook to see her safe to the school, and placed under the immediate care of Miss Jumpsen.

To Millicent—on whom the change in her fortune had burst like a thunder-clap, leaving her for the moment so bewildered, so stunned, that she knew not whether to re-

joice or mourn, and who, when her stupor passed away, had recovered to hang round her generous benefactress as a loving and dutiful child—separation was heart-breaking. She did not, however, venture to offer any objection to the project, but after a sad adieu, passively accompanied Mr. Alderson to the carriage, and was borne to her destination.

On their arrival, they were shown into a drawing-room, and joined, after a brief interval, by Miss Jumpsen.

"A delightful retreat you have here, madam," said Mr. Alderson, as they began to converse; "and one where I confidently hope, from all I see and have heard, my young friend will pass many happy days. Your household use of that book——" and he glanced at a large Bible, lying ostentatiously open, "confirms me in my expectation."

"I am exceedingly glad to hear the system

pursued at this establishment commended by a clergyman, sir," answered Miss Jumpsen, whose discourse, it should be observed, was, on occasions of a public character, a sort of oral phylactery; "for I value the good opinion of our pastors and masters, as the catechism expresses it, above any. It is my earnest wish to afford those confided to my charge the advantage of a sound Scriptural education, and to do so effectually I require to be continually exercising myself. *Ahem!*" —Miss J. was subject to a titillation in the throat, particularly when excited.

"You follow the course most likely to succeed, madam. Nothing could be better."

"You are very obliging to say so, sir. *Ahem!* I presume—I should say, I have no doubt—from your kind remark, you approve of the evangelical principle as applied to schools?"

"Oh! most certainly."

"Then, I trust it is in full operation under

my roof, sir—at least, to have it so is my aim, my study. And, the truth is, I am ably assisted in my endeavours by the clergyman here—a most kind friend of mine, and a shining light to us all. Perhaps you know him, sir—the Reverend Firebrass Dobbs, A.M? *Ahem!*"

"I have not that pleasure. I am very glad, though, that he takes such an interest in your school, as it must, I am sure, be beneficial to all parties."

"It is, indeed, sir—extremely, unspeakably beneficial, and to the use of edifying—— But I am quite neglecting my dear young friend—for such, I do hope, she will henceforth be"—with a simper. "Permit me, dear." And stepping up to Millicent, she affectionately loosened the strings of her bonnet. "With your permission, sir, I shall now have the happiness of introducing my new charge to her schoolfellows. If you can find anything to amuse yourself here"—

and she pointed, with a smile of triumph, to two enormous globes—"I will return in a moment, and have the pleasure of presenting my sister."

Mr. Alderson bowed. "I will take leave of my young friend, then, madam," he said, at the same time offering his hand to Millicent—it was a rule with him to shake hands with everybody. "I have no doubt you will be very happy here, Miss Rennel," he said, in a bland tone, though with a touch of the patron. "Have you any message for Mrs. Grantley?"

Millicent's eyes filled, but she could not speak.

"I understand," said the vicar, pressing her hand. "Good-bye, Miss Rennel."

Millicent, thus severed from her latest familiar acquaintance, followed Miss Jumpsen from the room, recovering in time to give monosyllable replies to her observations, as they passed along a passage to the school-

room. The door thrown open, Miss Jacintha was discovered at a table, while a bevy of youthful fair ones, varying in age from seventeen to nine, was dispersed around.

"Miss Jacintha," said Miss Jumpsen, who, when making any remarks in the schoolroom, always apostrophised her sister, "I have brought you a new friend, who, I am glad to say, has come to take up her abode with us —an addition to our happy family."

This announcement, stereotyped for such occasions in Miss J.'s memory, immediately gave rise to a general whisper, in which Millicent's person, features, and dress, were the subject of a variety of comments.

"Young ladies!" exclaimed Miss Jumpsen, in amazement. "Miss Jacintha, I am perfectly astonished! The discipline—the very existence of the establishment is at stake, Miss Jacintha, if you suffer a continuance of such shocking behaviour. *Ahem!* What

must this young lady, who *is* a young lady, who has not been used to such scenes—what must she conclude, I say, from this exposure of the whole school? I blush to think!"

Profound silence followed these words, so that a pin was heard to drop; it was a hair-pin!

"I am sure," continued Miss Jumpsen, pursuing her victory, "no one would suppose for a moment that this was a school of young ladies. I wish, for my part, some of those present would take example by the boys at Mr. Littlejohn's, and then we should have no more disorders. I would not for worlds that the fact of their prevailing here should be reported to the Reverend Firebrass Dobbs. *Ahem!*"

"I must intercede for the young ladies, sister," said Miss Jacintha, "as no doubt they are a little excited at the arrival of our young friend. How do you do, dear?" she added, turning with a wreath of smiles

to Millicent, and then giving her a very gentle kiss. " Are you quite well ?"

" Quite well, thank you, madam," replied Millicent.

" Do you think, Miss Jacintha, we may venture to leave Miss Rennel here for a moment while you come with me to the parlour ?" asked Miss Jumpsen, with a look of great doubt.

" I think I can engage there shall be no more disturbance, sister," was the reply; " and knowing I have pledged my word for them, all, I trust, will be careful not to compromise me."

But her confidence was completely misplaced; for the two governesses had no sooner turned their backs, than a general commotion took place. Books, maps, slates, writing materials were at once discarded, and all crowded forward, with the eagerness and warmth of old friends, to welcome Millicent.

"How do you do, dear ?"

"I hope you are quite well, dear ?"

"I'm so glad to see you, dear."

Such were the salutations which broke in on all sides, accompanied by showers of kisses, quite overpowering Millicent.

"I hope you have got no family secrets, dear ?" said a sprightly girl of fifteen, as the raptures began to subside. "I must forewarn you if you have, that you'll be taken to the pump-room very soon."

"Hush !" said another, amidst a general giggle.

"You needn't say hush because I'm here, Miss Rivers," cried a third. "I understand what you mean, miss; but you know very well it is untrue. But suspicious people judge others by themselves."

"Tell-tale-tit !" exclaimed a voice behind.

"That's you, Miss Romney," half-screamed the denounced, as she swung round, amidst a peal of laughter.

A hot conflict of words ensued; and Fanny Raymond, the first speaker, favoured by the diversion, was able to communicate freely with Millicent.

"I wish you would be my friend, will you?" she said. "I am sure I shall love you. You look so gentle, so good."

"Oh! thank you, thank you; I shall be very glad, if you will let me," replied Millibent, in her sweet, soft tones.

"You know, it is just what I want, and now we shall be so happy together. I will tell you all the mysteries and histories of the school, so that, if you're at all quick, you'll be a guide-book yourself by to-morrow. But pray mind what you say to Miss Jacintha—beware of the pump-room."

"You mentioned that before. What does it mean?"

"Why, we call Miss Jacintha's parlour the pump-room, because, when we first come to school, she takes us there, as she will you

directly, and then you are coaxed into telling everything about home, which she treasures up in her mind till one day, when you happen to offend her, she throws it in your face, distorted into something you would never have dreamt of."

"How wrong of her! But I am so much obliged to you for telling me. Now, whatever she asks me, I shall say as little as possible. Yet I thought she seemed so kind."

"Ah! that is all deceit, all put on, because you are a new pupil. It is her way, that,—which makes us call her the gay deceiver. Ha! ha! I'll tell you all about her; but——"

"Miss Jacintha! Miss Jacintha!" flew round the room.

As the door opened, there was, notwithstanding this warning, still some trace of confusion; but the fair governess affected not to notice it, being anxious to strike Millicent in the most amiable and engaging light.

But forewarned is to be forearmed, and Millicent, trained in a hard school, and accustomed so early to the rubs and caprices of fortune, was not easily imposed upon. It was with difficulty she suppressed a smile, when everything related to her by Fanny was fulfilled to the letter. Soon as she appeared, Jacintha, with the most affectionate look imaginable, invited her to the little parlour—her Retreat, as she prettily termed it, where, according to immemorial usage, she was to be initiated in the masonic ordinances, at the same time rendering an inventory of all her possessions. And now, by degrees, as the business proceeded, they fell into a conversation, in which Jacintha threw out all her lures, all her blandishments; but Millicent was not to be ensnared, and at length, seeing that further inquisition would be useless, the governess desisted. She found herself contending with a superior mind, which, revealing nothing of itself, seemed to

fathom her real character; and from that moment Millicent became odious and hateful to her. At parting, she smiled sweetly, but it was the smile of Dalilah.

CHAPTER :

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while yet a child, the companion and fellow-labourer of men and women, with no refuge from tyranny, no defence against wrong, but her own resolution—no resource against suffering but endurance—she was, by habit, by necessity, if not naturally, self-relying. But with this innate strength, her disposition, if not aroused by some powerful emotion, was retiring — shrinking—darkened always by the remembrance of a sterile childhood, making her doubt and distrust the continuance of prosperity. A constant apprehension haunted her night and day, in thought and in dreams, that she could not realise the expectations of her benefactress, and that a chain of circumstances, forged by some cruel, inexorable destiny, would lay her open to the shafts of envy or detraction, and bring about her downfal. In a word, she was fearful, anxious, and depressed.

But now fairly launched—afloat on that dreary, unexplored sea, she gradually took

heart. Diligent, watchful, patient, never daunted by difficulty, never relaxing in application, her progress was amazing, and she found the obstacles which, at first sight, had assumed the stupendous outlines of mountains, sink, at her approach, into insignificant molehills. Her gentle and unassuming manners, disarming anger, and which no provocation could ever betray into petulance, soon won the affection of her schoolfellows; and with Fanny Raymond, especially, as each day showed them more and more of each other, she became inseparable. How happy had all been thus! But in this little community of friends, there was a relentless enemy, Miss Jacintha!

As Millicent was always perfect in her lessons, and unexceptionable in behaviour, Jacintha, to her great chagrin, had as yet been unable to practise any direct oppression; but scarcely a day passed that some treacherous and unworthy snare was

not set for her. Still she continued docile and obedient, never once murmuring, or, when too severely tasked, urging the slightest plea for indulgence. Jacintha, unable to comprehend such elevated endurance, began to think her a reed, whom she could trample upon at will; but it was a reed strong as the oak.

Subordinates always take their tone, and borrow their impressions, from those of the ruling power; and Jacintha's undisguised enmity exposed Millicent to the petty tyranny of the teacher, Miss Withers, a crabbed young spinster, who made it the chief aim of existence to worry the pupils and toady Jacintha.

Meanwhile, the week passed, bringing again the tranquil Sunday, and Millicent, after sitting in church with her schoolfellows for half an hour before the service—a Jumpsenian mode of sounding trumpets at the gates, was edified by a sight of the Reverend

Firebrass Dobbs. Arrayed in fine linen, made, by an artifice of the laundress, to resemble the puffed amplitude of episcopal lawn, with head aloft, and nose elevated, in haughty disdain of those who sat at his feet, this provincial Gamaliel taught anything but peace, charity, brotherly and Christian love. If Mr. Alderson was Calvin, here was Knox — nay, Bull Marshall, Hugh Peters. He was not a candlestick in the Church, but a flame—in verity, as Miss Jumpsen perpetually asserted, a very great light, but a burning one. There was fire and brimstone in his sermons—fierce, savage intolerance, condemning all whose sentiments and opinions did not accord with his own—and, O! sacred Nine, there was poetry! Romanism he had a full right to denounce; but why, when so stoutly abusing the Pope of Rome—why pillage Pope the sceptic?

A few days afterwards, Millicent was in Miss Jumpsen's sitting-room, receiving a

private lesson in embroidery (for she had become a favourite with Susan), when a servant announced the Reverend Firebrass Dobbs.

"Really this is very kind of you, Mr. Dobbs," said Miss Jumpsen, tripping forward to meet him. "I am so delighted to see you. But how could you venture across the common in such weather,—and you an invalid?"

"A soldier of the Cross must not be over careful of himself, Miss Jumpsen," said Firebras, "and you, I am sure, would be among the last to have me neglect the good work in my hands."

"I cannot say that," returned Miss Jumpsen; "for the flock have a deep interest in the shepherd; and any mishap to you must have an effect on us. You need not go away, Miss Rennel."—Her intimacy with the Reverend Firebrass Dobbs, she imagined, must appear rather imposing to a new pupil. "Take your work to the window."

"You speak with your usual good feel-

ing, Miss Jumpsen," observed Dobbs, without noticing Millicent; "but these sentiments, let me tell you, are not universal. By many, as you well know, my labours and sacrifices are contemned, even my ministry calumniated. Such is one of the consequences of that odious, that unholy measure, the Popish Relief Bill."

Dobbs, among other peculiarities, laboured under a singular hallucination that every evil in the world had this fatal, diabolical source.

"Is it not dreadful?" cried Miss Jumpsen, clasping her hands.

"I repeat, it has been the cause of all the crime, all the calamity, that our country has witnessed, and so severely felt, from the moment it became part of our laws. You may defend it, dear madam, I know some do; but I pronounce it accursed."

"I am sure it must be," protested Susan, for the thousandth time. "Don't think for a moment I could defend it. *Ahem!*"

"You may say," persisted Firebrass, "it was an act of political justice—you may urge the clap-trap plea that it enfranchised millions of fellow-citizens; but——"

"Pardon my interrupting you, my dear sir, but do not suppose I could be misled by such shallow arguments, or, indeed, justify so wicked a measure in any way. I quite concur in your opinion of it."

"It was a scheme of the Jesuits, madam, designed and drawn up in the Inquisition—a villanous scheme, for which we shall yet have to forfeit religious freedom."

Susan wrung her hands.

"I have talked, preached, written on the subject, given warnings in every shape, and without end, but in vain. They will not repeal the suicidal act; they will not hear me. Well, time will show I am right—and a short time, too—a very short time."

Before Susan could answer this oration, a servant presented her with a visitor's card.

"How provoking!" she exclaimed. "I

look upon your conversation, Mr. Dobbs, as one of my most inestimable privileges, yet so sure as you favour me with a visit, something happens, at the very moment we are most interested, to take me away. I know how precious your time is, but may I venture to request you will wait for me a few minutes, and I will return."

"I have many calls upon me, you know; —but, well, I do not know how to refuse you."

"You are too kind. My little library here"—pointing to a book-rack—"may possibly furnish something to amuse you."

"I shall find employment here," said Dobbs, laying his hand on her ever-open Bible.

"Good man!" murmured Miss Jumpsen, displaying the whites of her eyes. "*Ahem!*"

But, left to himself, Dobbs thought no more of the Bible. Forgetting Millicent, who, seated in the bay-window, escaped notice behind a screen, he planted his back

to the fire and reconnoitred the land. When sufficiently toasted, he turned round to the pier-glass, and reconnoitred himself.

The door opened, and Miss Jacintha entered, advancing with slow and mournful steps, and downcast eyes, lost in reverie.

"Contemplation's self appears!" cried Dobbs, gallantly.

"Mr. Dobbs!" exclaimed Jacintha, with a burst of delight. "Naughty man, you have given me such a start! And yet—yes, I will confess—I am not sorry to see you."

Dobbs looked majestic, but made no remark.

"The fact is," resumed Jacintha, "I was just thinking about you,"—a simper, and traces of confusion—"but gentlemen are all such vain things—yes, even Mr. Dobbs, modest as I know him to be naturally—that I am almost afraid to tell you exactly what it was."

"Pray let me hear."

"He! he! there is the curiosity of the sex. Oh! you gentlemen!—he! he!"

"Upon my word, you give us a nice character, Miss Jacintha. I hope your opinions on this point are not shared by Miss Jumpsen?"

"Oh, no! she is so charitable, so indulgent, unless people are positively wicked, and then she is equally severe. But I know you think me light and frivolous, Mr. Dobbs?—yes, you do; do you not? and I always so anxious, too, for your approbation!"

"Are you? Well, I must own, since you ask me, I think you a little wayward, but you'll grow more staid by-and-by. Time is a stern tutor."

"And that is all you can say for me?" And Jacintha turned away, and buried her eyes in her handkerchief.

"Why, my dear young lady, you are not weeping, surely?" cried Firebrass. "You

must not take as a rebuke what was meant half in jest."

"I know it is very foolish—very foolish, indeed," whimpered Jacintha, "but a word of reproof from you, Mr. Dobbs, so affects me—pierces me—that I cannot command myself. I don't know how it is, for I can bear anything from other people. What am I saying! Do I not seem distracted, Mr. Dobbs? The fact is, I am quite out of spirits to-day; and now, from my strange behaviour, you will think worse and worse of me."

"No, no, I shall not. Compose yourself, Miss Jacintha. What will your sister think if she finds you in tears? You have dropped all your papers, too. Ah! what is this?"

"Oh! give it to me. Do not look at it—do not, I beg!"

But Dobbs's eyes were rivetted on a miniature of himself. Jacintha, the picture of confusion, was Diana surprised at the fountain.

"Drawn from recollection," murmured Firebrass, reading an inscription on the card-board. "And by whom, pray? You must tell me, my young friend."

"Do give it to me," and Jacintha laid her hand on the portrait, close to Dobbs's; "I am sure you think me so bold!"

A vision of 2000*l.* consols, in the name of Jacintha Jumpsen, flashed across the mind of Dobbs.

"Was it by these fair fingers?" he asked, tenderly.

"Oh!"

It was a critical moment. Fate hung by a thread, when lo! Millicent, who had for some time been growing more and more uneasy, made a sudden movement, and down went the screen, smashing a china jar as it fell.

"Miss Rennel!" screamed Jacintha.

"What *is* the matter?" exclaimed Miss Jumpsen, at this instant entering.

Jacintha, goaded to madness, pointed at the fragments.

"Only a freak of Miss Rennel's," she said, hysterically.

"Miss Rennel, go to the schoolroom," said Susan, "and learn by heart the three first chapters of Proverbs. You are fined five shillings to the missionary box."

Dobbs said nothing, but in the secret recesses of his heart, pronounced Millicent a Jesuit in disguise—a spawn of the Catholic Relief Bill.

CHAPTER XVI.

The play-hours of that day, and part of the next, Millicent passed in the schoolroom, endeavouring to master her tedious and vexatious task. Meanwhile, Miss Jumpsen, gradually recovering from the effect of the breakage, began to reflect that what had happened was a pure accident, and became disposed to conciliation.

"Why are you not out, Miss Rennel?" she asked, finding Millicent alone in the schoolroom. "On so fine a day you should be promenading the grounds, not shut up here."

"I am learning the imposition you set me, madam."

"Ah! true. Well, I shall remit that, as you have been so heavily fined. Go and join your schoolfellows."

The grounds surrounding the house, already stated to be extensive, had been expensively and tastefully laid out, with a view to creating a proper impression on the minds of parents and guardians; and, certainly, they formed alone no slight recommendation to such an establishment. Rounding a broad lawn, Millicent proceeded towards a spot where, at some distance, voices notified the presence of a sprightly and noisy throng.

"Hist! hoy!" said some one near, as she entered an avenue of limes, running along by a high wall.

Turning, Millicent discerned a face through the foliage, just above the wall which she judged to belong to a swain some year or two older than herself. A hand and

arm next appeared, and were waved lovingly from his lips.

"Don't be frightened," he said; "I saw you at church on Sunday, and have been watching ever since to pay my respects to you. By Jove, you bang Fanny—you take the shine out of them all."

Though much offended, Millicent, in high spirits at her release, could scarcely repress a smile at this amorous salutation; but, without making a reply, quickened her pace, soon reaching a spacious grass-plot, where, notwithstanding the restraint of Miss Withers's presence, her companions were, to a certain extent, left to divert themselves as they pleased.

"You have got out, then?" cried Fanny Raymond, running up to meet her. "But what is the matter? You are almost breathless."

"I have been a little startled as I came down the walk, by some one on the wall."

"Ha! ha! it is young Harper, who lives in the next house. He is always making love to one of us, and, I dare say, is now smitten with you. I'll go and speak to him."

"Oh, don't, pray. It will be so wrong."

"Nonsense! I knew him at my uncle's, before I came here, when he used to visit us. He is very gallant, though false as Lothario. Indeed, to tell you the truth, he has just forsaken me, after three months' incessant courtship. But I'll play him a nice trick."

"Dear Fanny, think what you are doing. I am sure you will be sorry by-and-by. Pray do not go."

But the wilful girl broke from her with a merry laugh, and darted up the walk.

Millicent, in momentary dread that they would be noticed by Miss Withers, who watched over her charge like a lynx, remained on the spot, anxiously awaiting her return. She was not long absent, and came back convulsed with glee.

"You are a perfect female Cæsar, Millicent," she cried, "and may say '*Veni, vidi, vici.*' Oswald is quite in raptures with you. He besought me, by every sentiment of friendship, only to tell him your name, and, as a reward, promised to throw me over a splendid bouquet to-morrow morning."

"You did not tell him, I hope?" said Millicent, earnestly.

"You will laugh so! I asked him what he thought of the name of Sarah Withers. Oh, dear! he said it was prime. Ha! ha! there's a word for you—prime!"

Millicent looked grave. "This is too bad of you, Fanny," she observed. "What would Miss Withers say, if she were to hear of it!"

"She will hear of it, then, be assured," laughed Fanny; "for I told him, if he was anything of a lover, he would chalk up Sarah Withers all about; and he declared he would come over the wall to-night, as soon as it was dark, and do so."

"Oh! do run back and beg him not to come. You are really going too far, Fanny. This will be so mortifying to Miss Withers; and, though she is unkind to us, I will not be a party to it."

Another light laugh broke from Fanny.—"It cannot be helped now," she said, "for Oswald has gone away. Besides, it will be the best fun in the world. But you are such a prude, Millicent. I will engage to say, no one would be more astonished than the fair Sarah herself, to hear you taking her part."

"I do not take her part, nor could I, if I were inclined. I have tried to esteem, or, at least, to respect her, but frankly confess I am unable to do so. But do you not think, Fanny, by retaliating in this way, we become little and mean ourselves?"

"Most certainly not, Miss Propriety. If you get so nice, I shall begin to think you a saint—a Firebrass Dobbs in petticoats. I do believe, if we were long under your coax-

ing influence, you would have us all such good little dears, that we should, in course of time, be a match for the boys at Mr. Littlejohn's, so constantly held up to us as models."

"You make me smile, though I am really very serious. I would give anything to prevent this."

"Would you give five shillings more to the missionary-box?"

"I would, indeed."

"Then I must say you are a very good girl. And so you truly are, my dear, patient Milly." She twined her arm round her waist, adding, "Let us walk a little, dear. How did you ever get through those teazing proverbs?"

"Oh! very easily. Miss Jumpsen exonerated me."

"Did she? Come, that's not so bad of Susan; but I know she has good points, and, besides that, you are rather in favour there. So am I, too, or, what with Jacintha's ty-

ranny, and Sarah's persecution, I really believe I should revolt."

"You have no endurance, Fanny."

"No. I wish you would give me some; for you must have a good store."

"I acquired it in a hard school, dear Fanny."

"I don't know what school is *not* hard. The sway here is not particularly gentle, I think. But I fancied you had never been at school before?"

"I used the term figuratively," said Millicent, colouring; "but we will not talk of that now. You will think, too, I dare say, that I am setting up for an oracle, in giving you advice; and I acknowledge, in most points, you would make the best Nestor. But, you know, Fanny, you are rather impatient, and a little too fond of mischief, are you not, now?"

"Accused persons are not bound to criminate themselves, as my uncle, who is a

judge, will vouch," cried Fanny, with a laugh, " and therefore I shall not plead to the soft impeachment. You will see to-morrow what fun we shall have, when my little scheme takes effect."

The event realised her most sanguine expectations. Next morning, the unpopular teacher's name was seen chalked up in every direction, wherever the walls were sufficiently exposed; and every prominent tree bore her initials. The school was in a perfect tumult. What could it mean? Who was the perpetrator? In short, could any one explain it?

Such were the exclamations that flew from mouth to mouth, as the young ladies, fresh from the morning toilet, spread through the grounds, while peals of laughter broke forth from each at every new revelation of the mysterious caligraphy. Miss Withers, soon apprised of the scandal, through the active zeal of her myrmidon, the friendly

Savage, was perfectly frantic; and hastened to complain to Jacintha, who, indignant as herself, promised a searching inquiry, at the same time dispatching the gardener and footman to efface the offensive inscriptions.

When school assembled, it was evident something more than ordinary was on the cards, as both Miss Jumpsen and Jacintha, who seldom shone together, were present, and the mortified look of Miss Withers could not conceal impatience. Not a word was said, however, till all the pupils had taken their seats, when the great topic was mooted.

"Miss Jacintha," observed Susan, "I beg the young ladies will all give me their attention for a few minutes."—A death-like pause, such as is said to forbode a hurricane.

"*Ahem!* It is a matter of deep regret to me, Miss Jacintha," said the orator, "and I am sure to you also, that any person connected with our establishment, and especially

one filling the responsible situation of teacher, should receive such a public affront as that just put upon Miss Withers. I have no hesitation in saying that it is a device of some wicked person or persons unknown, to bring disrepute on the school."

"How shocking!" said Jacintha, looking terrified. "I am sure I had no idea, sister, that there were people so wicked in the world. And poor Miss Withers, too."

Withers produced a handkerchief.

"Miss Jacintha," cried Susan, "I beg Miss Withers will not be the least concerned about the occurrence, which, in fact, is no reflection upon her. No; I consider the affront as offered to me—to the whole school; and I shall not rest till the person or persons be discovered. This is the duty we owe to our neighbour, as you will, I think, see explained fully in the Catechism."

A very alert girl, designing to be complimentary, here opened her spelling-book at

the Catechism, and plunged into an investigation.

"I beg the young ladies will attend exclusively to me, Miss Jacintha," pursued Susan, with a frown, turning the alert girl's spelling-book into hot-iron. "Of course, I cannot suspect any one here of being a party to so infamous an action; but I wish to ask, before I take more decided steps, whether strangers have been observed lurking about, or if there is any clue whatever to the person or persons."

Replies in the negative broke from all quarters. Miss Withers's eye, scanning the assemblage, paused on Millicent, who, with the excessive sensitiveness which pertains to innocence, blushed deeply.

"Just look at that sly, deceitful girl, Miss Jacintha," whispered Sarah. "I am sure she knows something about it."

"Miss Rennel, stand up, if you please," cried Jacintha, but too ready to imbibe the slander.

Millicent obeyed, but not with the agitation expected. Though feeling herself the mark of every eye, her face was now pale, and betrayed no trace of embarrassment.

"You will have the goodness to say what you know about this affair," continued Jacintha.

"How!" exclaimed Miss Jumpsen. "Is there any reason to suppose Miss Rennel, in particular, can give information about it?"

"I think there is, sister, though I cannot say why. But I have my suspicions."

"I trust, and I believe, you are mistaken Miss Jacintha," said Susan, a little ruffled—for she was aware of the bias against Millicent. "Did you see any one writing on the walls, Miss Rennel?"

"No, madam."

"I thought not. You may sit down."

"One moment, sister, if you please," cried Jacintha. "I wish to ask Miss Rennel some questions."

"By all means," said Susan, though in an offended tone.

"Pray, Miss Rennel, did you do any of this writing yourself?" inquired Jacintha, maliciously.

"You cannot imagine I did, madam," was the reply.

"And you positively declare that you know nothing about it?"

"I do not say that," answered Millicent.

"There!" exclaimed Jacintha, with a triumphant glance at her sister, while a buzz of amazement rose around.

"If you please, madam, Miss Rennel knows nothing but what she has been told by me," cried Fanny Raymond, hastening to interpose.

"You see how it is all coming out now, Miss Jacintha," observed Withers. "It is a deep laid plot against me—a shameful, wicked plot!"

"Silence in the school," cried Miss Jump-

sen. "Now, what have you to communicate, Miss Raymond? What did you tell Miss Rennel?"

"I told her what I saw last night, madam," said Fanny, relating what was indeed strictly true. "I happened to look out of the window when we went to bed. It was moonlight, and I perceived some one creeping along by the lime-walk, and he seemed to be writing on the wall."

"Was it a man or a female?"

"A man, certainly."

"Should you know him again, if you met him?"

"Oh! it was too far off, madam, to see his face. I could only distinguish a moving figure."

"And you have nothing more to say?"

"Nothing."

"Then it is needless to protract the inquiry. Still, I cannot conclude without saying, in this public manner, that I am very

sorry for Miss Withers, whose feelings have been so outraged; and I am sure, Miss Jacintha, you and the young ladies will join me in a sincere expression of sympathy, as well as in a hope that the affront will not be repeated. Now to our studies."

But neither Miss Jacintha nor Withers, though refraining for the present to urge further investigation, believed Fanny Raymond's statement, or Millicent's innocence, and, in consequence, the two girls were worried and persecuted all the morning. This had little effect on Millicent, but Fanny, unable to control her warm temper, gave way to resentment, and was punished with the mark for misconduct. Thus, having a heavy imposition during mid-day play-hours, it was not till afternoon school was over that she joined her friend in the grounds.

"So you are come at last," said Millicent, gaily. "I was afraid you would not get out."

"Oh! I mastered it," replied Fanny, laughing, "though the gentle Sally made me repeat every word. But now Greek meets Greek. We will be revenged, Milly."

"Do not say that, or for a moment think it. I am really grieved at the part we have taken already, and must confess it has been very culpable. Let us do nothing now, dear Fanny, that we shall look back upon with regret hereafter. Only reflect what a narrow escape we had to-day."

"All through certain tell-tale blushes on the prettiest face in the world! Ah! that's right, put on your grave looks; for I assure you, between our two dear selves, they are by no means unbecoming."

"You are incorrigible; but I have a scolding to give you, which all your badinage shall not avert."

"Oh! pray let us have it at once, then, though my remarks, I beg you to understand, were not intended as badinage, but as compliments. But it is a mad world, my

mistresses. Here was poor I, expecting, in the simplicity of my heart, to be thanked and praised, and I don't know what, for my capital generalship this morning, and, instead of that, it turns out I am only to be scolded."

"Yes, and for that very thing, you Jesuit. You know how artfully you evaded every question put to you."

"To be sure I did, and very properly. Would you have had me denounce my own self?"

"No, dear Fanny, but, to be serious, I do think you had better have been silent. You might be sure I would not betray you."

"You would have done worse than that, my monitress," said Fanny, with a fond caress—"you would have betrayed and inculpated yourself. Ah! I know you, I know you, Miss Milly; so no more preaching, if you please, or scolding either. Talk as you will, whenever you are in the claws of the

dragon, I shall dash in, in the shape of St. George on horseback, and bring you bodily off."

"You are a most provoking, loving little Fanny," returned Millicent, with a soft and affectionate smile, "and I don't know what I am to do with you. But one thing I am sure of—if we go on this way much longer, we shall become the scape-graces of the school."

"They say we are the graces already. That is enough, I think; for I do not consider the addition at all ornamental."

"Oh, Fanny! Fanny!"

"Milly! Milly!" And the wild girl broke into a peal of laughter.

"Hist! hoy!" cried a voice from the wall.

"Well done!" exclaimed Fanny. "There's Oswald, Milly. You must come and speak to him. I will introduce you."

"No! no! not for worlds. Let me go

Fanny, I beg of you. I will—I must go." And, releasing her arm, she darted away.

"Hoy, what's she bolting for?" cried Oswald from the wall.

"I don't understand you," answered Fanny.

"I mean, why does she run away?"

"Oh! If you use such rude words, I shall run away, too."

"No, no, don't! I've got such a capital bouquet for you. Look here. I broke into the greenhouse, and smashed about a dozen pots to get it. There—catch! I don't know what Pater will say when he hears of the damage."

"Is he the gardener?"

"By Jove, no! Pater's father — my governor!"

"Then, you are making me a receiver of stolen goods?'

"No, I'm not. I can take what I like, only my fellow, Caliban—you've seen him,

haven't you? (a remarkably handsome animal)—well, he lost the key, and so, you know, I was obliged to force the door."

"It was very kind of you, I am sure. But I think I am a favourite with Pater; so, if the broken pots provoke him to wrath, you had better say the bouquet was for me."

"Oh, never mind him. I want to hear about Sarah—Miss Withers, I mean. Why didn't she stop a minute?"

"Oh, you would not expect such a thing, if you knew her," said Fanny, laughing.

"I did, then, I assure you. But what did she say about her name being chalked up?"

"Oh, you didn't do it half enough. You should have made her a Rosalind—chalked it everywhere about the place."

"So it was almost; but if she isn't satisfied, I'll do it more to-night. Tell her so, will you?"

"Oh! she'll be sure to see it; and you can't do anything better."

"I hope she'll stop and speak, then, next time she passes; for I'm going away in a day or two to Oxford."

"Are you? I am sorry for that."

"Do you think your friend will be sorry?"

"Oh, no; she'll only laugh at it."

"Will she, though! But you've told her, I suppose, how much I'm in love with her?"

"Of course; but I cannot say the news has had any effect. Indeed, she has discovered, by some means or other, that a few days ago you were desperately in love with me."

"Humph! that's unlucky."

"Yes. No doubt she thinks you very fickle, but I have told her I don't care a pin about you, and never did; and that, perhaps, will soften her a little."

"I don't know," said Oswald, somewhat disconcerted. "But what you said was not in earnest, I suppose, was it?"

"To be sure it was. You haven't the vanity—the impudence, to suppose that I

cared for you, surely? Well, well! But I can't stop any longer. Mind what you have to do to-night, and bring me a nice bouquet to-morrow; or it's just possible, now you've affronted me, that I won't speak to you again."—And before he could reply, she glided behind the trees, and was out of sight.

That night, Oswald's labour, followed up with untiring spirit, left no room for complaint, the very doors being marked with Withers's initials, while her name appeared in full on the walls, in large capitals, thus:—

SARAH WITHERS OH
FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

—the OH, though appearing as an interjection, being designed to represent the initials of the lover—Oswald Harper, and the sentiment, to rebut the imputation on his constancy.

Matters were now becoming serious. The enemy, as Jacintha and Withers denominated him, was no longer a guerilla, harassing out-

posts, but he nailed a cartel on their very gates. It was a maxim of Pitt's that, in very great and sudden emergencies, the boldest measures are the safest; and Miss Jumpsen was of a somewhat similar opinion, deciding, in this moment of doubt and trouble, to invoke the friendly offices of the Reverend Firebrass Dobbs.

Firebrass, who had a great objection to being any way flustered, had not visited his fair friends since the attack of Jacintha. On after-thought, he had come to view the interruption of that scene as a sort of deliverance, securing an interval for consideration. The fact is, he hesitated between Phillis and Chloe. Jacintha's charms, so artfully paraded, had indeed made an impression; but Susan's piety, toadyism, and additional thousand in the three per cents., were no less tempting. He must take time to decide.

"Oh! Mr. Dobbs, what will you think of me for pestering you so?" cried Susan, when

they met. She had contrived to leave Jacintha, whose admiration of Firebrass had latterly appeared somewhat too fervid, in the schoolroom. "But I am in great tribulation, my dear sir—persecuted by some evil-disposed person or persons; and I turn for counsel and assistance to you, as—as—to a natural protector. Yes, that is the feeling: will you permit me to indulge it?"

"Most certainly," answered Dobbs. "But what has happened, Miss Jumpsen? Tell me at once; and, be assured, you shall have my best advice."

"It is so shocking—so dreadful! such a scandal on the house and the establishment. I am an unmarried lady, Mr. Dobbs, and consequently have no protector"—here Miss Jumpsen could not repress tears—"or, though I trust I am of a Christian spirit, I do believe no one would dare to offer me such an insult."

"Is it possible any one can have insulted

you ?—you, who are so gentle, so unoffending ?"

"Oh ! Mr. Dobbs, these words—*your* praises, my dear sir—my pastor, comfort and reassure me. Had I accepted the offer of marriage from Mr. Wilkins, or the proposal of Mr. Jukes, I should not have been left thus defenceless; but they did not interest my feelings, Mr. Dobbs. They had not the needful—no religion, no religion !"

"Then you did wisely to reject them—yes, wisely, were they ever so eligible on worldly grounds. You are not to be thrown away, my dear Miss Jumpsen." — Susan wrung her hands.—"No; you have reason to give thanks—much, much to be grateful for—the goods of the earth, the endowments of the mind, and—and—and your personal appearance, dear madam. Marry a man without religion ! why, that is the most precious of balms; it is a treasure—it is money?"

"It is—it is!" exclaimed Susan.

"But we are wandering from the subject, dear madam. You have not yet told me what has occurred."

The direful incident was disclosed, in Susan's most forcible language.

"Most wicked! most shameful!" exclaimed Dobbs. "You see, now, what we owe to the iniquitous proceedings of the legislature. You may not perceive the connexion, but, believe me, the root and source of this occurrence, its prime origin, if we could follow it out, would be found in that barbarous, that inhuman measure, the Popish Relief Bill."

"Is it possible?"

"Nothing is more certain. At a fitting season, I will convince you, by the most irrefragable testimony, that we may trace every evil to that atrocious act. But now let us investigate this business; for as your friend, and your pastor, my dear madam, I am determined to sift it to the bottom. Have you no clue to the perpetrator?"

"None; but Miss Raymond, one of my pupils, has each night seen from the window some person in the grounds, about ten o'clock. We have no idea who it is."

"Then to-night you must set a watch for him, as he will most probably come again. I will send up the beadle to assist you; and, depend upon it, we shall bring the miscreant to justice."—And he rose to depart.

"You are so kind—so considerate," said Susan, taking his proffered hand. "Oh, Mr. Dobbs! we unprotected ladies have sad, sad trials to encounter."

There was a significance in Dobbs's pressure of her hand, which, in that moment of extreme difficulty, filled her eyes with tears.

He did not forget his promise of assistance. As soon as it was dark the beadle, Mr. Meek (who, by the way, was far from being humble) arrived; and, after regaling in the pantry, adroitly planted an ambuscade,

composed of himself, the footman, and the gardener. In addition, a steel-trap was set in the lime walk, where, according to Fanny Raymond, the enemy had twice appeared. Miss Jumpsen and Jacintha awaited tidings in the drawing-room; and Withers, as the party most interested, hovered near the back-door, ready to pounce out on the first alarm.

Now all was watchfulness—all anxiety. The silence was absolutely thrilling. If a cinder fell from the grate, if a door creaked, Miss Jumpsen started, though, as her wont was, endeavouring to appear heroic; and a winding-sheet in the wax taper struck terror to the heart of Jacintha. There was a knock at the chamber-door.

"What's that?" cried Susan, starting up.

"Oh, mercy!" half-screamed Jacintha, as the door slowly opened. "We shall all be murdered!"

A white figure entered: it was Fanny Raymond *en nuit.*

"He's coming, Miss Jumpsen," she said. "I just saw him in the lime walk. If you come into my room, you'll see it all from the window."

"Oh! I am glad of that. Let us go, Miss Jacintha."—And go they did.

"Look, look, madam," whispered Fanny, as the window was reached. "Don't you see something?"

"Yes, yes, I see it," cried Susan.

"Angels and ministers of grace!" murmured Jacintha.

"There, take that, you wicked thing," shouted Fanny, dashing a can of water on the person below. It was Miss Withers.

"Murder! murder!" screamed the teacher, receiving the deluge on her head.

Meek, the beadle, instantly rushed out upon her.

"You willin! you gallows willin!" he exclaimed. "Ain't you ashamed o' sitch a bobbery, you good-for-nuffin? But I've got you now."

"Oh, you'll choke me,—you'll choke me," shrieked Withers. "Let me go, I say."

"Not while I've a paw to hold by," answered Meek, furiously.

Meanwhile, Oswald, who had really arrived on the spot, ran against the gardener and footman.

"Here he be! I got 'un!" cried the gardener. "Oh, gosh! he's give me a buster!"

"Here's down with his house!" exclaimed the footman, rushing at Oswald.

There was a scuffle; and the footman, who plumed himself on his pugilism, fought manfully, keeping up till the gardener recovered wind. At the same moment they were joined by Meek, and Oswald found he must make off.

"Stop 'un! stop thief!" shouted Meek, in hot pursuit.

"You keep on the walk, and I'll have 'un by the short cut," cried John.

He rushed over shrub and flower-bed to-

wards the lime walk, while Meek and the gardener, scarcely less eager, ran round the path. A moment afterwards, a piercing cry reached their ears, and hurrying on, they discovered John fast in the steel-trap.

"My leg's nipped off, I think," he cried, "and we are diddled, too; for he's got over the wall. But I know him now. It's that young scapegrace, Harper."

"Missis will have it out with him to-morrow, then," said the gardener, freeing John from the trap.

But on the morrow Oswald had set out for Oxford.

CHAPTER XVII.

The incursions of Oswald had now ceased, but not their consequences to Millicent and Fanny. Though nothing could be traced to the two girls, and it was impossible to associate them with the real offender, both Miss Jacintha and the injured Withers still thought they were some way implicated in the late transactions; and, like Iago, made the mere suspicion a sufficient reason for pursuing them with vengeance. Even Susan was persuaded, by dint of incessant complaints, that they were most culpable and incorrigible characters: and next morning,

for some trivial negligence, set them both a tedious imposition, with the ignominious addition of coventry.

Treatment so harsh and unjust had a most depressing effect on Millicent, who, in fact, had been wholly blameless. She strove, in vain, to learn her numerous morning tasks: in the distraction of her mind, it was impossible. For the first time since her arrival at the school she was deficient; and Jacintha, pressing her with questions, had the signal satisfaction of seeing her fall to the bottom of the class, which afforded occasion for a severe lecture on idleness and obstinacy. Taunts and reproaches, however, recalling self-possession, and exciting a feeling of indignant pride, were inspiration to Millicent; and, in an incredibly short time, she committed to memory the whole of the imposition inflicted as her punishment.

"You cannot know it already," said Miss Jumpsen, when she presented herself for examination.

"If you will hear me, madam, I think you will find I do," replied Millicent, deprecatingly.

And, to Susan's astonishment, she repeated every word, without once requiring to be prompted.

"You have an excellent capacity, Miss Rennel," observed Susan, involuntarily touched by her beauty and gentleness, "but, let me assure you, neither that nor your other advantages will win respect, if your behaviour does not correspond with them."

"I am very sorry that you are not satisfied with me, madam," replied Millicent. "I have been most anxious to obtain your good opinion, and trust you will soon regard me in a more favourable light."

"At present, you have lost my confidence," rejoined Susan, "but as you have been so diligent, I shall now remit the remainder of your punishment; and Miss Raymond, too, shall be free, as soon as she repeats her lesson."

But Fanny, confined to her own room, was otherwise employed, having borrowed from a schoolfellow one of those profane and heretical books called novels, smuggled through the custom-house of Jacintha's Retreat, no one knew how. It had already gone the round of the school, and, enriched with the marginal criticisms in pen and pencil of its numerous readers, had been unanimously voted a classic. Fanny, then, was for the second time devouring this contraband, when Withers, entering on tiptoe, and stepping unperceived behind her, discovered it.

"MARRIAGE!" she exclaimed, seizing the prohibited tome, as a hawk would pounce on a dove. "Oh! Miss Raymond! how could you! You must come directly to Miss Jumpsen—you must, indeed."

Susan heard the accusation in portentous silence, and instantly communicated with Jacintha.

"Is it not horrible, sister?" exclaimed Jacintha, shutting her eyes in agony. "And the title, too!—the very title—'MARRIAGE!'"

A groan broke from Withers, who, notwithstanding, from constantly studying the parts of M. or N. in the Prayer-book, could repeat the marriage service by heart, and really longed to inspect the forbidden pages.

"I share your horror of such books," said Susan, "and have determined to set my face against them, in the most decided way; for I consider them in the highest degree pernicious. Miss Jacintha, order the school-bell to be rung immediately, if you please."

"Certainly, sister."

"Stay, I will just speak to you for a moment."

And a few words were exchanged, in an under tone, when Jacintha left the room.

Still no observation was addressed to Fanny, who stood a few paces back, demurely awaiting the result. At length, Jacintha returned.

"You will have the goodness to proceed to the schoolroom, Miss Raymond," Susan then said.

Obeying, Fanny involuntarily headed a procession, formed of the two sisters walking abreast, in great state, followed by the solitary Withers.

The pupils, summoned by toll of bell, were now all assembled; and a kitchen-maid stood in front of the fire, grasping a pair of tongs. By her side was a low stool, perverted from its natural mission under Jacintha's feet; and on this, sacrifice worthy of a nobler altar, lay "MARRIAGE."

"I wish this moment, Miss Jacintha, to be impressed on the memories of the young ladies, as affording a lesson for life," said Susan, as the procession halted at her desk. "A pupil of our establishment has been discovered reading a novel—yes, a novel, Miss Jacintha, and one, too, of the vilest description, if I may judge from the name, which I

should blush to mention. I never thought to see the day when such a thing could occur, —*Ahem!*—but since I am doomed to a misfortune so great—since it is my lot to know, feel, experience it, I am determined to mark my reprobation in the strongest, the most emphatic manner. I beg every one will understand that the person convicted of the misdemeanour is Miss Raymond, who, I am sorry to see, shows so little sense of shame, though she may be assured she shall not go unpunished."

"I hope not, sister," observed Jacintha. "That would, indeed, be like encouraging wickedness."

"Justice shall be fully satisfied, Miss Jacintha," resumed Susan; "but, meanwhile, I must, in your presence and before Miss Withers, and the young ladies, insure the destruction of the book itself. Deborah, I command you to commit it to the flames."

The vengeful tongs were raised, and poor

Miss Ferrier's charming novel, which had passed unscathed through the frigid hands of the critics, even winning a tributary encomium from the lips of the Great Wizard, was rammed remorselessly into the fire.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A FEW days afterwards, Fanny Raymond, while still expiating her offence, received a letter from her uncle, the Judge, stating that a relation had just died, leaving her a great accession of fortune, and that in consequence of the change in her prospects, it was resolved that she should immediately leave school, and finish her education at home.

Her departure was universally regretted, and cost Millicent many tears. It was not till she was gone, indeed, that the other pupils discovered, by the hiatus thus occasioned, what a cheerful and animating influence her

gay spirit had communicated. Then the dull wearying monotony of each day's routine, having no relief but the insipid interval of the play-hours, when, in fact, there was no play, as any overflow of youthful buoyancy was denounced as unladylike, and the slightest exhibition of mirth considered an impropriety—then, in the absence of their dare-all, joyous sister, the rigorous and conventual discipline of school became almost insupportable.

The great treat was a walk in the green lanes, or through the town. On one of these occasions, Millicent obtained permission, in their way down the principal street, to purchase some writing materials; and, having effected that object, was hastening after her companions, when she nearly ran against two passengers, who, to her astonishment, proved to be Charles Belwood and Helen.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Belwood, recognising her, in spite of the great change

in her appearance, which struck him with wonder. "Can that be our lost girl?"

"Yes, yes!" said Helen, in an agitated voice. "It is the face I have so often thought of—the kind, good girl I spoke to you about."

Millicent heard all, without stopping to say a word, though, quickly as she turned, recognition was seen in her heightened colour and look of alarm. Belwood and Helen were associated in her mind with recollections full of dread; and though she felt undiminished interest in the latter, a panic, which seemed instinctive, urged her to avoid them. Nor was it easy to repress her agitation, even when she had rejoined her schoolfellows.

Gradually recovering, she had, amidst her daily occupations, almost forgotten the circumstance, when, after school, in passing into the grounds, she was met by Deborah, the kitchen-maid, who, sidling close up to her, presented a note.

" A lady gived it to me for you, miss," she said, in a whisper, " and I warn't to let nobody know."

Blushing and trembling, and scarcely knowing whether she did right or wrong, Millicent accepted the billet; and, hurrying to a retired spot, found it to run thus:

" Will you see me, dear friend, for one moment? By the great kindness you showed me at the time you remember, by your own gentle heart, and as you would relieve mine of a weight of misery, I conjure you to grant me this boon.

" I cannot call at the school, as a visit from me, who am unconnected with your present friends, would necessarily occasion inquiries, and I have particular reasons for living in privacy. Do, then, my dear young lady, contrive to be at your garden-gate this evening, at ten o'clock, and meet your ever obliged, " HELEN BELWOOD."

Again and again did Millicent read and study the letter. Meet her! clandestinely, and at night! How could Helen make such a request, knowing, as she certainly must, the difficulty that would attend compliance? —the misery, the opprobrium, discovery must entail upon her! It must be plain that she was not now, as formerly, in such a situation as to view the result with indifference; but, on the contrary, bound, both by duty and interest, to keep herself beyond even a breath of suspicion. Yet a strange lottery of events seemed to link and connect her with Helen —to draw them together, to throw their fortunes into one pool! To Helen, too, in a measure, though indirectly, she owed her release from a degraded, debasing bondage— her elevation to her present position, so wondrously, marvellously different. And could she refuse her a meeting sought with such eagerness, pressed with such earnest-

ness, and represented to be of so much importance to her? No! be the consequence what it might, she must, she must comply.

Nine was the hour appointed by Miss Jumpsen for the pupils to retire to rest; and, as soon as all was still, Millicent, drawing a shawl over her head, slipped out of the bedroom, and softly descended the stairs. It was very dark, but she contrived to grope her way to a passage opening on the principal staircase, amply lighted by a lamp below. This, however, daunted rather than encouraged her, as, in case of any one appearing, she must be discovered before she could retreat. The reflection had but just occurred to her, when it seemed to be realised. Miss Jumpsen's parlour, where the sisters usually sat, led out of the hall, and, a door opening, Millicent heard her voice, followed by the affected laugh of Jacintha.

She had scarcely time to fall back into the

drawing-room, when Jacintha mounted the stairs.

Screened by a window-curtain, Millicent waited a few moments in anxious expectation, her hand pressed on her throbbing heart. But Jacintha passed on; a door slammed overhead; and all was again quiet.

With noiseless step, Millicent set forward anew, and descended to the hall. The back-door, which seemed the safer outlet, was secured for the night, but she removed the fastenings without difficulty, and reached the garden.

Darting up the drive, she arrived breathless at the gate. Then, glancing behind, she perceived an object in the avenue, which at first looked like a human figure; but it disappeared instantly, and she concluded it was only a passing shadow, flung across by the trees. She raised the latch of the gate: it was locked.

It now occurred to her that the key was hung up every night in the hall; and as the interstices were too small to creep through, there was no resource but to go back for it. She flew along like a frightened bird, starting, indeed, at every breath of wind, every rustle of the trees. Again, as she looked round, a figure seemed to fall back from the avenue, into the deep shadows of the shrubbery; and again, after a moment's doubt, she considered it imaginary. With repressed breath she re-entered the house; all was still; and, reassured, she possessed herself of the key, passing forth once more.

On coming to the gate, she had some difficulty in opening it, but at last succeeded, and stepping out, swept her eye anxiously over the strip of common lying between the school and town. The next moment she heard a voice behind her, and turning, discovered not Helen, but Charles Belwood.

How strangely, how wildly her heart beat;

and how, dark though it was, the warm blood rushed to her cheek and temples. The vast change effected in her position, feelings, and mental acquirements; the alteration in her fortune, in her destiny, since she and Belwood had met, when—so great was the disparity of their rank—he appeared to be a being of another order—a higher and more refined intelligence, not to be mentioned, scarcely to be looked at, and she, by birth, by inheritance, by a fate beyond control, his degraded and ignorant serf, unable to discern good from evil—this marvellous and stupendous contrast flashed vividly before her, reviving for a moment the awe she had felt of him in her days of debasement. She looked round for Helen, and found—they were alone!

Helen, indeed, had written to her at the instigation of Belwood, who, struck by her extraordinary beauty, and enraged at such a prize having slipped from his hands, deter-

mined at all risks to carry her off, making use of Helen to abet and cover his designs. The nature of her former connexion with Millicent allowed too much room for practising on her fears, and, by such crafty suggestions, he rendered her extremely solicitous for an interview with her. He then engaged to deliver the note himself, and professing to have received a message in reply, informed her that, in consequence of the strict regulations of the school, Millicent was unable to come out, thus preventing her attendance, which, of course, would have completely frustrated his object.

"I began to fear I should not have the happiness of meeting you, Miss Rennel," he said, taking her hand before she could draw back. "You are behind time, but you had, I dare say, some difficulty in getting out."

"I had, indeed, sir," faltered Millicent. She would have asked for Helen, but, in the

excess of her agitation, her tongue clove to her mouth.

"It is really too bad," resumed Belwood, "that a girl of your years, and your experience of life, should be kept under such rigorous restraint, as if you were still a child. But you are a woman now, Miss Rennel, and, let me add, a woman whose great attractions claim deference and indulgence, as well as admiration."

"I have nothing to complain of, sir," replied Millicent, in an instant rallying, and not acknowledging his compliment. "Had I asked permission to come out at a proper hour, I should, I make no doubt, have obtained it, but the note I received imposed secrecy. This has placed me in a situation I feel most distressing, and which, indeed, may be of serious consequence to me; but still I hope I am acting right. In no other case could I be induced to take such a step."

"Why, putting all this aside, what harm have you done?" returned Belwood, gaily. "I declare you have grown a perfect little prude. If you do not take care, these Miss Jumpsens, with their quaint, out-of-the-way scruples, will make you quite old maidish in a little time."

"The scruples are my own, sir, and—pardon me—they are of such a nature, that I must instantly leave you, unless you are accompanied by—am I to say *Miss* Belwood?"

"Or Helen! which you like," said Belwood, with a slight laugh, though his face, notwithstanding the veil furnished by night, flushed deeply, "But you imagine, perhaps, she may have changed her name since you saw her?"

"I—I did not know," stammered Millicent.

"Oh, you would have heard," rejoined Belwood, "even in your retreat here, had

such an event come off, though, I confess Helen's acquaintance with you, now I know of it, is a mystery to me, and the more, as I cannot get her to explain herself. I was astonished, when we met this morning, to find you were such friends."

"Miss Belwood is not with you, now, then, Sir?" said Millicent, receding, and making no direct reply to his remark.

"Ha! you will only harp on that one string. Suppose Miss Belwood is *not* here, will not Mr. Belwood do?"

"It was Miss Belwood I came to meet, sir," replied Millicent; "and as she does not appear to be present, you must be aware I cannot, with any propriety, remain."—And bending, she turned away.

"Stay," said Belwood, earnestly—"stay Miss Rennel, if you have not quite forgotten

the past. Time was, when Mr. Belwood was not an object of such contempt to you—when, at least, you were not above speaking, above listening, to him."

"I remember that time, sir. I was then a poor, untaught, toiling girl—without kindred, without friends. I remember, too, you were my master. But my situation is now very different, and I must claim to be differently treated."

"You are unkind, ungenerous. Have I not treated you with the utmost consideration? Even when you were the poor girl you describe, did I not always show you, whenever I visited the works, that I had a great partiality for you? Yes, you must recollect this. You know, on h e night of the explosion, I had you removed from the pit in my carriage, and conveyed to Belwood

House. If I had not, most unfortunately, been called away, you should never have left it."

"I must not listen to such expressions as these, sir. Let me remind you once more that I have come to speak to Miss Belwood; and if she is not here, I must leave you."

"You will not even let me congratulate you, then, on the change in your fortune?—for I heard of your being adopted by Mrs. Grantley. Nay, pardon me, I will no longer detain you from Helen, though I would indeed give kingdoms, if I possessed them, to protract our interview. But I must trouble you to walk up to the carriage, as Helen is too ill to alight, and, to prevent any alarm to your worthy governesses, who might have caught the sound of wheels, I left the carriage in the lane."

Millicent hesitated a moment. "This is unfortunate," she said; "but having come so far, I cannot turn back: only I must beg you to hasten, sir, if you please."

Belwood made no pause till they reached the lane, where, as he had said, the carriage was waiting, in charge of a mounted postilion. Seizing the handle of the door, he offered Millicent his arm.

"Thank you," said Millicent, retreating a few paces, as a sudden apprehension of treachery occurred to her. "I will speak to Miss Belwood here."

"But she is so ill," urged Belwood; "and you will be more comfortable yourself, too, in the carriage."

"If—if you will ask her," said Millicent, slightly agitated, "I think——"

"She dare not expose herself to the night

air," said Belwood, impatiently, "but as you insist upon it, I will ask her." And he added, opening the carriage door,—"Helen, would you like to come out?"

A rustling noise was heard in the vehicle, and to his amazement, Helen stepped forth.

"Devil!" he said, below his breath, recoiling as if stung by a serpent; "what brought you here?"

"Do not be so angry, Charles," answered Helen. "I thought as the evening was so fine, you would not object to my following you, and finding the carriage here, I waited a little, hoping Miss Rennel might be able to come out."

A muttered curse was Belwood's reply, as unprepared how to act, now his original design was frustrated, he turned away.

For a moment Helen was undecided

whether to follow him, and entreat forgiveness, or advance to Millicent, who, equally perplexed, felt, as on meeting Belwood, a diffidence natural to the refined delicacy of her mind, in addressing one formerly so much her superior. But Helen, when her first panic subsided, found her very distraction a source of strength and confidence.

Again she was face to face with the only one of her sex privy to her secret. A strange mysterious tie governed and connected them; and without being acquainted with the exact circumstances of the judicial inquiry respecting her infant at which Millicent had been arraigned, or having any precise information on the subject, she knew, from certain vague rumours, that this unsought association had well-nigh been fatal to Millicent. Thus, though they had met but once before,

and then only for a few minutes, Millicent seemed an old and tried friend, on whose bosom she could throw herself, in her despair and her isolation, without fear of being repulsed, reproached, or betrayed.

"You will think me very inconsiderate for troubling you to come so far, instead of meeting you at your gate," she said, stammering; for though, from a combination of circumstances, Belwood's purpose was only too obvious to herself, she hoped that it might not have been observed by Millicent. "Be assured, it was not from want of regard," she added, with an affectionate pressure of her hand. "I have long prayed to see you, though fearing we should never meet again. I cannot tell you how melancholy that has made me, how it has weighed on my mind, and often cost me tears. But you tremble,

dear, and seem so flurried. If you do not like our being by ourselves, I will call Charles." But she said this uneasily.

"Oh, no! no!" replied Millicent. "It is not that. The truth is, I am distressed at being here at all. Had you come to see me at the school, it would have been so much better. I should then have been so happy to meet you."

"And I should have preferred it myself, but Charles—that is, on reflection, I thought we had better meet privately. But shall I walk down to the school with you now?"

"If you are not too ill, I would beg you to do so, and I can answer your questions as we go."

"It is just what I should like. Shall we take this path?"

"Yes."—And they turned towards the school.

"You must not think I am merely complimenting you, dear friend," resumed Helen, "but I cannot help saying how glad I am to find you as you are—in a station which, in truth, you seemed to be born for. Let me tell you, too, you have come upon me like a gleam of sunshine, chasing the shadows from my heart; and now you are with me I feel a degree of security, such as I have not known for a long time. Ever since that dreadful night, I have lived in perpetual terror."

"How sad for you! And yet there was nothing, as far as I ever knew, to inculpate you. You could have no cause for apprehension."

"Was there not some rumour—some sus-

picion? I heard there was something, though what I could never learn."

"No. Your name was not mentioned; and I believe the circumstances, up to the moment of my being found in the church-yard, can only be told by me, so you will really do very wrong to entertain any fears."

"Your words give me new heart—almost new life, dear Millicent—if I may call you so. I can now raise my face, when I return among my friends, without trembling. You are probably aware I have not yet avowed my marriage?"

"I conjectured so, from an expression of Mr. Belwood's. It must make you very unhappy, I am sure."

"It does, indeed; and the more so, as there is, I think, no longer any reason for

concealment." She stopped abruptly, and there was a moment's pause.

"Do you reside in this town now?" said Millicent, at length, to turn the conversation.

"Oh, no! we leave to-morrow. My cousin Charles, who has a great distaste for the country, goes to London, and I move about for the air, and partly, indeed, because I do not like to be at home. But how the moments fly! Here is the gate, and I have not yet spoken to you on a point long next my heart, and which I cannot think of, even now, with composure. Do you know what became of my child?"

"It was buried in the churchyard, as you wished, by Mr. Thornhill."

"Mr. Thornhill!" said Helen, in a star-

tled tone. "Did Mr. Thornhill know it was mine?"

"I fear he did, but I may be mistaken. He never actually said so."

And, anxious to spare Helen's feelings, she would have suppressed the severe cross-examination she had sustained from the doctor; but the disconsolate lady, perceiving that something was withheld, so pressed her with questions, that she was obliged to disclose it. She scarcely noticed how Helen was affected by the communication, being too much agitated herself, as, with a sickening qualm, she thought of the time their conversation had consumed.

"I must really leave you now," she said "I am quite in terror lest my absence should be discovered."

"Then, I will not keep you any longer,"

replied Helen, tenderly kissing her ch
"But you will bid Charles good-bye.
is, I see, close behind us."

"I would rather not speak to him ag
if you will excuse me," said Millicent. A
returning Helen's salute, she glided thro
the gate.

Passing rapidly on, she came, without
terruption, to the house, and softly ope
the door, finding the hall, as she had lef
quiet and untenanted. At this moment,
door by which she had entered was ag
opened, and, turning, she beheld Jacinth

"I hope you have enjoyed your w
Miss Rennel," said the governess, with
lignant triumph. "It is a very proper h
certainly, for a young lady of our establ
ment to have a clandestine meeting wit
gentleman."

Millicent was speechless.

"You will have the goodness to go to your room," pursued Jacintha, "and remember, if you please, you are not to leave it again, till you are directed to leave the house."

She was to be expelled!

CHAPTER XIX.

WHAT a strange and inscrutable problem —what an unfathomable enigma—are the striking inequalities, the wide and capricious distinctions, the contrasts of life! To one all is perpetually smooth and brilliant, untainted by a breath of misfortune, without a shadow of disappointment. To another, it is the accursed and barren ground, the swea

of the brow, every step a struggle, every experience a disaster. One is given a summer day, rising, like Phœbus, in soft and subdued light, expanding into dazzling sunshine, setting tranquilly in beauteous and mellow radiance. Another is the tossing sea—the dark, tempestuous, and lowering sky, the rushing of foam-covered waves, the hoarse roar of breakers, the wreck dashed on rocks!

Poor Millicent! Her lot had, indeed, been cast in a dry place, far from refreshing waters!

She buried her head on her pillow in a passion of despair. What shame, what disgrace, was she doomed to suffer!—undeservedly! innocently!

Burning tears, wrung like blood from her heart, streamed down her cheeks; her throat quivered with half-suppressed sobs; and, for

her!

That appearances
sented by Jacintha,
was undeniable—an
vourable interpretati
excusable breach of
under circumstances
Such was the conclus
tably suggest; and the
the refutation was in
could not make the st
exculpation, as it woul
gible, be a betrayal of

its most hideous form—Despair, in its wildest aspect, seemed to stand before her, insatiable, pitiless—claiming her as their rightful prey. So often as she had looked forward with fond hope, so often flattered herself with anticipations and presages of the future, and now, in one fatal moment, her expectations, her bright and treasured dreams, were to vanish for ever, as the sparks fly upward. She had seen too much of Mrs. Grantley's strict views and inflexible principles to have any doubt that such would be the case; and, abandoned by her, she saw herself cast again on the world, friendless and destitute as at first.

Yet, no! She possessed, even in this cruel and desperate situation, one mighty Hope—one Tower of Refuge—one Source of Strength, which she had not then. Desolate

as she might become, without kindred, without home, she was no longer without God.

The thought gave her new courage. Her tears continued to flow, indeed, but they welled up more gently, with less and less bitterness. Profound as was her sorrow, she could now hear the whispers of Faith, soft and low as Æolian chords, soothing, inspiring her. Kneeling by the bedside, she prayed—committed herself to the Father of the fatherless, freely, unreservedly, asking only strength for His burden, trust in His mercy; and then, as if feeling her petition would be heard, arose resigned, if not comforted.

She opened the window and looked forth, finding a genial influence in the universal stillness. Huge clouds had come up with midnight, like a dismal pall, enveloping both sky and stars, but moonlight still gleamed

forth, not, indeed, as before, in a calm and silvery flood, but in expiring flashes, fitful and faint. Yet the same profound repose everywhere reigned. Not a breath of wind could be heard; and trees and shrubs and flowers, earth and heaven, were alike hushed and still.

Long it was before she closed the lattice, and sought her pillow, less for sleep than reflection. Day had broken before her eyes closed, and then she saw again, in her uneasy slumber, the same sad train of mournful and drooping images, unbroken by a single ray of hope or consolation.

All the morning she was in momentary expectation of a visit from Miss Jumpsen, who, however, did not appear, although, pursuant to Jacintha's injunction, she remained in her chamber. Meals were brought

to her by a servant, and the day passed without any other incident, to be succeeded by another tedious and sleepless night.

Late next morning, she was visited by Miss Jumpsen, who, indeed, had not agreed very readily to her sister's sentence of expulsion, partly, if truth must be told, in consideration of the pecuniary loss, and partly from a decided aversion to such severe measures. But Jacintha, with her usual self-will, overruled all objections, depicting Millicent's supposed dereliction in the most odious colours, and while enlarging on the discredit it would, if known, bring on the school, she placed in the strongest light the pernicious effect such an associate must have on the other pupils, so easily swayed by their seniors. To add weight to this, she represented her conduct in general from the mo-

ment of her admission into the establishment, as irredeemably bad, entailing a responsibility they had not expected, and from which, if her opinion was worth consideration, they could not relieve themselves too soon.

"I have come, Miss Rennel, to discharge a very painful duty," said Miss Jumpsen, on entering. "Your behaviour, I am sorry to say, has lately been very bad; but I am positively shocked to hear of your last transgression. Comparisons are odious, but I must say, in common justice, that I believe such conduct would not be tolerated among the boys at Mr. Littlejohn's. Of course, therefore, it cannot be suffered here—no, not for a moment."

Millicent looked up, as if about to speak, but checked herself.

"I do not ask for an explanation," re-

sumed Miss Jumpsen, "because, to be plain with you, the thing speaks for itself, and is so perfectly outrageous, that it admits of no excuse. Under these circumstances, but one resource is left me—the last stringent penalty our little community can impose. You will be expelled."

"I trust, madam," said Millicent, with the strange calm she sometimes assumed in moments of difficulty, "you have reflected on the stigma such a decision will fix upon me. I could easily prove that I have done nothing wrong, but, in that case, I must break a promise of the most solemn kind. Yet, believe me, madam, it was not to meet a gentleman that I went out, but a lady."

"Do not aggravate your fault, Miss Rennel, by a course of prevarication," returned Susan, severely. "It is time you should

know that Miss Jacintha, seeing you leave the house, followed you, and reached the gate just as you walked away with a gentleman. I am grieved that she did not stop you, and bring you back, but she was so horror-stricken, it seems, that she did not know what to do. You will see now the utter futility of denying the charge."

"I do, madam; yet still assure you I am innocent."

"Oh, hush! hush! I entreat," cried Miss Jumpsen. "Do think what you are saying; and how dreadful—how very heinous, these falsehoods are. You have indeed profited little by my instructions, but I cannot expect my humble efforts to succeed, when you have even gained nothing from the pious ministry of that angel in human form—the Reverend Firebrass Dobbs. Oh! Miss Rennel, I fear

really they are appal
Miss Rennel. As a
to read your Bible."

Millicent inclined

"And now I have
add," resumed Susan.
yesterday to Mrs. G
dreadful transaction, a
you, and I am expecti
some one will arrive to
will, therefore, get your
am anxious that you sh
a moment longer than is

drew, her grief, which had seemed subdued, resumed its former intensity. Innocence is said to be strong and courageous under persecution, sustained and fortified by self-approval; but those who have suffered tell a different tale, and one, alas! but too strongly marked with the impress of truth. Millicent certainly felt satisfaction in conscious rectitude, but it did not diminish the odium of her situation, or render it at all more supportable.

She was aroused at length by the entrance of a housemaid, who said,

"You are wanted in the drawing-room, miss,"—and presented a card.

Millicent's pale cheek grew whiter as she read the name—

MRS. GRANTLEY.

"I will come directly," she said.

She lingered a moment, in a vain effort to compose herself, raising a deprecatory look to heaven. Then she slowly descended to the drawing-room.

Mrs. Grantley—for it was indeed she—was conversing with the two sisters, but hearing the door open, she turned round, and encountered Millicent's appealing, supplicating gaze.

"My dear, dear child!" she cried, hastening to meet her.

Millicent uttered a cry, and sank in her arms.

END OF VOL. I.

THE

DAUGHTER OF NIGHT:

A

STORY OF THE PRESENT TIME.

BY S. W. FULLOM.

Can such things be,
And overcome us, like a summer cloud,
Without our special wonder?

SHAKSPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE

DAUGHTER OF NIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

There is scarcely anything so fruitful in misery as hasty attachments, formed without consideration, pursued in defiance of reason. The mystery of woman's heart is in nothing so inexplicable, so decided, so grand. Its affection is eternal! Reverse or disaster, insult or wrong, oppression, cruelty—nothing can efface the deep, indelible impress of her first love. Long it is blind, wilful, immovable; and even when her eyes are opened,

dregs, still she loves—ev
not respect.

Helen Belwood had b
kened to the vicious ch
band. His handsome pe
dazzled and fascinated he
was stripped of its borro
deformity within. She
cipator of his brilliant co
devoted wholly to her, a
had experienced and ant
happiness. Taunts and
curses—even blows, had
her dreams—made her kn

setting him up as an idol, though a Juggernaut.

It is needless to state in detail the grounds she had for suspecting that the answer he brought from the school, in reply to her note to Millicent, was a fabrication, and that he had in hand some evil design of his own. It has been shown that she followed him, determined, at whatever risk, to prevent injury to her friend.

But the great defect of her character maintained its pernicious ascendancy. The same indecision which had betrayed her into a precipitate engagement, a clandestine marriage, and a fatal promise of secrecy, and which was constantly creating new difficulties, now made her pause, waver, and deliberate. She reached the Common, and found the travelling carriage, confirming her worst suspicions, but how, supposing them true, could she venture to present herself to

Belwood? After all, too, Millicent might not come out, and even did it happen otherwise, she was on the spot to befriend and protect her. And so it happened!

Belwood started that night for London, without again seeing her; and left to follow her own inclinations, she set out in the morning for home. From a circumstance which transpired, however, she imagined that Millicent's stray from the school had been discovered; and comprehending at once the embarrassing position this would place her in, she determined to communicate what had occurred to Mr. Thornhill, and entreat him, as a friend of Mrs. Grantley's, to clear Millicent from blame.

The Doctor listened to her disclosures in silence, but evidently with deep interest.

"When we parted," she said, in concluding the recital, "I could not help looking through the railings, to see if she arrived safe at the

house; and then I observed a figure start from behind a tree, and follow her. It was a woman, and, I fancy, one of the teachers, who had probably been watching us."

"The natural consequence of your round-about proceedings, Helen," said the irritable Doctor. "Why could you not go openly to the school, and ask to see the girl, without so much fuss and mystery?"

"I had particular reasons for secrecy, dear sir," replied Helen, colouring, and looking down. She might have added, that she had acted at the dictation of Belwood.

"You always have," said Mr. Thornhill. "Now, no crying, Helen, but sit down, like a good, sensible girl, and let me talk to you as a parent; for indeed I look upon you as my child. I may claim to do so, partly from my connexion with your dear mother, and partly because, at my decease, all I possess will be yours."

"You are too good," answered Helen, in tears. "Nothing could compensate me for your loss."

"Well, well, don't cry. I want to make you happy, but it will be quite impossible, if you persist in such a dreadful tissue of mysteries. And now I come to an important point, which I have long wished to speak to you about. How is it you have not yet avowed your marriage?"

"My husband will not permit me," was the scarcely audible reply.

"Your husband!—a pretty husband, certainly! But why not say Charles Belwood at once? I know very well it is he."

Helen was silent.

"There it is, you see," cried Thornhill. "You have no decision, Helen—no courage. Do act more for yourself, and by yourself, or there is no saying what mischief may happen."

"I know—I know I am a weak, foolish, helpless creature — a coward — miserably, wretchedly fearful. But do not deem me indifferent on this subject. You forget I am bound to wait my husband's compliance—bound by an oath."

"That is what vexes, what exasperates me. How could you enter into such a contract blindfolded, without confiding it even to me? You could not trust *me*, yet you trust so implicitly, so indiscreetly to others."

"Your reproaches are too just. I have indeed trusted indiscreetly. And yet—yes, I may be wronging him."

"You are wronging yourself, and most grievously. While your uncle was alive, I could imagine a reason for secrecy, though he would, I think, in spite of your precautions, certainly have discovered the marriage by this time. But now, when you are ab-

"No. But my husban
son—he must, or he woul
me in such misery."

"Such bondage, you m
But as it is, till you take
yourself, I do not see how

"No, no, you cannot—
Soon, I hope, these sad
will pass away, and bring
happiness. But let me s
of Millicent Rennel. You
Grantley about her, will y

"Yes. Have you any
make?"

Thornhill pressed her hand, and turned away, not trusting his voice with a reply.

For some time, Helen, full of the painful subject they had been discussing, was absorbed in reverie, sad, sombre, and depressed. Her tender sensibility was wounded by his roughness, which, indeed, though she knew it to be associated with the kindest intentions, had the effect of repelling her confidence, when she was most inclined to bestow it. Her timorous, shrinking nature required to be encouraged, persuaded, almost flattered, into any disclosure of her secret fears; and Thornhill's fretful irritability alarmed and unnerved her. Unhappily, with a character so infirm, there was not one to whom she could turn for support and counsel.

About a week after their conversation, she was sitting alone in the breakfast-room, brooding over the same desponding reflec-

tions, when a servant informed her that one of the pitmen was in the hall, wishing to speak to her.

"I cannot see him to-day," replied Helen. "He had better tell his business to you."

"I said so, miss, but he won't. He says, you wouldn't like nobody to know about it."

A sudden panic seized the young lady—a strange, instinctive fear, making the blood rush to her heart.

"This is very singular," she said, after a moment's reflection. "Is the man so positive?"

"Yes, miss, he says he won't go away till he sees you."

"He is in some difficulty, perhaps," returned Helen, striving to rally. "Here"—and she drew out her purse—"take him—but, no! let him come in, Sarah. I will see him."

In a few moments, the visitor, who was no

other than Black Jem, was introduced, wearing an air of sullen insolence, which, however, softened as he glanced around, involuntarily overawed by the display of so much sumptuousness and luxury. Neither could he entirely shake off, in Helen's presence, his innate sense of inferiority, or the show of humble deference he was accustomed to pay superiors. Unfortunately, however, Helen's startled look gave him courage.

"I am told you desire to speak to me," she said, after eyeing him a moment in silence, her tones too plainly betraying agitation. "I do not know what you can have to say, but I did not like to refuse you. Are you in any distress?"

"Not partickler, marm," answered the miner, with a familiar grin; "no, marm. I only jist wanted to tell you summut. But we be by ourselves, marm, bain't us?" And he looked cautiously round.

marm," he said. "It's a frie
to 'ee—a friend as ha' keept
the time thee were away, n
nobody. I knowed as you
agen, and now us is here
bairn't goin' to turn abou
fear."

"I do not understand you,
scarcely knowing what sh
must tell me your object in
you wish me to be of service

"Sarvice! Well, may be
be *I* can be of sarvice, too:

would have turned away, but the fascination of a basilisk rivetted her eyes on Jem.

"I bain't goin' to make nuts on it, marm, for it ain't no use, and wouldn't do no good to nayther on us. But may be thee'll moind a wench as were here ance—ane of our pit volk, marm, Mill Rennel?"

"What of her?" faintly murmured Helen.

"Whoy, marm, there were a blow up in the pit a toime ago, and Milly were one of them as was hurted; so what does the young squire do but has her lugged up here, for he'd got his eye an her, arxin your pardon, for a good bit afore. She were dead-beat, loike, and didn't know about it; but in the noight I finds her coom oot agen, as roight as wax. I picked her up in the churchyard, marm."

"The churchyard?"

"Yeez, marm, a queer sart of a place, warnt it? She'd dug up a grave there, too,

jist as ane 'ud scoop oot a flower-pot, and, dang her! she warnt without summut to shove in't. Nobody 'ud guess hardly as it t were a dead babby."

A mist came over Helen's eyes; the room seemed to whirl round; but she neither moved nor spoke.

"She's took better care on ever since, marm, that there wench is," resumed Jem; "and so 'ull I be when all's knowed as wull be knowed. But I wanted to say as the babby had duds on—as foine clothes, marm, as ever I zeed—reg'lar slap-up, and what's more unkimmon, were wrapped over in a Indjee shawl. So it couldn't be hern, could it, marm?"

Helen made a desperate effort to recover herself.

"I—I really cannot hear any more of your story," she said. "It seems a very sad and painful one though, and—and you are an

distress, no doubt." And she drew forth her purse.

"Stop a minute, marm; I were jist goin' to tell 'ee as none of the babby's things 'ud got ony sart o' mark on 'em, but there was a summut tied round its bit of a neck, toighter nor were ony call for, as were stamped wi' a name."

"A name!" exclaimed Helen, convulsively.

"It were this eer," pursued Jem, holding up a handkerchief, which sent a cold shudder through her frame. "And the name on it's yourn, marm—HELEN BELWOOD!"

A cry rose to Helen's lips, but was denied utterance. She then made a step towards where Jem was standing, but suddenly stopped.

"This is most extraordinary," she said. "But are you sure it is *my* name on the handkerchief?"

death. But I never let
the babby was, *nor hou*

"Who says he was mu
who can say it?" cried
of anguish.

"Ho! it ain't no use
marm: it's as clear as sn
to take my 'davy-oath on'
murdered, and by its own

Helen seemed stunned
murmured, below her br

"*That's* it—*that's* the

"You have come here
midate me," cried Helen,

"A hunderd pound."

"Oh! you cannot mean this! But you may not know that I am poor—almost penniless."

"Gammon! Do 'ee mean to say, as thee ain't got a hunderd pound by 'ee?"

"No! indeed I have not."

"Do 'ee moind as I'se only to give the word to old Stuck, the headborough, and he'd haul 'ee up afore a magistrate?—not our young Squoire, but Muster Harley, as won't squash the consarn. It's *his* case."

"You cannot—you dare not, bring such a charge against me," said Helen, her teeth almost chattering. "Do not interrupt me—do not, in pity, even name it again. I am willing to satisfy you, but cannot:—I will give you all I possess."

Jem mused a moment. "How much ha' thee got then?" he said.

Helen opened a desk, and drew forth some notes and a few sovereigns.

"Fifty pounds," she replied. "You may take it all."

"That'll do for the present, then," returned Jem, grasping the booty, while his large eyes flashed delight. "It owght to be the hun-derd by roights; but I see what it be—cut and coome agen. And I'll just take these eer in, to kick the beam, loike."—And he snatched a pair of bracelets from the table.

"I cannot give you these," cried Helen, in despair. "They are a gift from—from my husband. I will let you have something else, but these I cannot part with."

"Somehow, I've took quoite a fancy to 'em, and couldn't let 'em go, thank-ye, marm. Findin' is keepin': so I'll jist say good mornin'."

"...you?" cried Hele[n]

It won't be long fust, don't 'ee think! Haw! haw!"—And he rolled out of the room.

His hoarse, fiendish laugh still rang in her ear—seemed still to peal forth—to deride and mock her. See her again! Yes, there was no doubt that his visit would be too soon repeated—that he would soon subject her to fresh exactions.

At first, she determined to avoid further annoyance by claiming the protection of Mr. Thornhill; but on reflection, she saw the matter in a light so repulsive, so abhorrent to her feelings, that she immediately abandoned the idea. In fact, since her memorable explanation with Thornhill, informing him of her marriage, she could never bring herself to speak to him, in any manner, of the circumstances connected with her child, though, from what Millicent had told her, feeling assured that they were all known to him. But, denied this resource, might she

not fly to Belwood?—to her husband? No, she could never, never tell him!

Such were the sad considerations that pressed continually on her mind, throwing gloom over every object, casting the blight of terror over every thought. She passed the day in continual apprehension, and sought in vain for rest at night, pursued even in dreams by horrible images, all figuring the same dark tale of sorrow and ruin. And still, day by day, hour by hour, the canker in her heart worked its busy and insidious way, paling her lovely cheek, dimming her radiant eye, till, at length, little trace remained in her wasted and sinking form, of her once striking beauty, but the withered, broken flower drooping on its stem.

Meanwhile, Black Jem, as soon as his object was attained, had hurried off to the Pit village, exulting at his success. An inex-

haustible mine now seemed open to him, to which, while holding possession of his secret, he could return at will, and always find fresh heaps of treasure. Chewing the soothing cud of this reflection, whistling a lively ditty, and swinging a tramp-stick in his hand in token of exuberant satisfaction, he arrived at his domicile, which, be it observed, now boasted for its mistress the quondam Doll Stukely.

"Well, how got 'ee on?" cried Doll, as he entered. "Did her fork out the chinks?"

"Reether," answered Jem, flinging himself on a large box, which served the double purpose of seat and wardrobe.

"Where be it, then? How much did her tip? Coome, Jem, be a brick, and tell us. Thou's got it all roight, bain't 'ee?"

"Pretty well I thank ye. Look ye here! What do 'ee say to them?" And he produced the bracelets.

"Oh, gosh! them *be* foine! They's for I, I know. Give 'em here, will 'ee?"

"Yo' ain't obligated to snatch 'em that way, yo' baggage. Rot 'ee, if thou snatches a thing out o' my fist agen, I'll droive a peck down your throat."

"I ain't snatchin', and don't yo' coome none o' your bounce," cried Doll, as she thrust the bracelets in her pocket, and then stood akimbo. "Thee ain't goin' to sarve I as thee did Sue Gosling, as you made drowned herself. If 'ee says much to I, I'll give 'ee summut you won't loike."

"Best not troy it an," returned Jem, though in a tone more subdued.

"Yo' best show what thee'se gat. Coome, I bain't goin' to bide here all day. I wants to go an a lark."

"There, then—there's the rhino," cried Jem, throwing her a note.

"This-eer? Whoy, its only a bit of paper, be it? Be this all her give 'ee?"

"That's a foive-pund-note, you fool."

"A foive-pund-note!" exclaimed Doll, with sparkling eyes. "You're a-gammonin' —a foive-pund-note!"

"Yeez, and there be more whor that coomed fram."

"More! Well done, lod! Thou's the fellow! Whoy it be more nor a month's wage, bain't it?"

"Reither. But look-ye here?"

"Oh! give it I—do, Jem, there's a good chap."

"Dont 'ee wish! But we'll go for a lark, as yo' says; and so get an your togs. We'll jist step ap to Radleigh a bit, to the fair, and, may be, furder. Give us a clean smock, will 'ee?"

"That I wull; but ain't I best put up the tin furst. Yo' won't take it all with 'ee."

"Yeez, I wull, though: so let it be, and do what I tell 'ee."

Doll, in high good humour, made no further objection, though longing to gain possession of the hoard, which, however, she saw could not be appropriated at present.

Jem's toilet was soon dispatched; but hers, of course, was more elaborate, occupying a longer time. It was completed, at last; and arrayed in a towering straw-bonnet, profusely adorned with cherry-coloured ribbons, which did not match ill with her ruddy cheeks,—a flowered gown, of the bed-curtain pattern, sufficiently short below to allow of a liberal display of white stocking, and wrapped in a flaunting shawl, she sallied forth, hanging on the arm of Jem, whose low-crowned hat was cocked jauntily, to give full effect to his long flowing curls, emulating the love-locks of Prince Rupert himself. Thus they picked their steps

through the miry garden, and the filth and ruts and puddles of the road, enriched by tributary streams from many a fruitful and teeming pig-stye, redolent as the sweet South.

Soon they climbed the Darstow hills, and trudging on, reached the vale of Radleigh. Now they were in the open country; the air, delivered from nephitic gases, was fresh and balmy; the road, dry and level. Doll, no longer obliged to hold up the bed-curtain, in order to avoid unsavoury accumulations, strutted along like a quean as she was; and bold Jem lit his pipe.

There were other miners and their wives at the fair, but the principal conflux came from the agricultural population—rustic servants and village Dulcineas. These were already engaged in the standard diversions —taking the air in gigantic swings, mounting aloft in revolving cars, or flinging at

knock-em-downs. There was the usual pushing, laughing, screaming; the beating of gongs, braying of trumpets, firing of pistols. Here, marshalled in line, stood an array of toy-stalls and gilded gingerbread; there a clamorous belligerent puppet-show. In one place was presented a giant or a dwarf; in another a dead monster, or a live prodigy. Now they passed a dancing-booth, ringing with mirth and music; now viewed the pomp and circumstance of Richardson's platform.

Doll was in ecstasies, and dragged Jem from one wonder to another, each involving a fresh outlay, till at last, and before very long, both his patience and his liberality were exhausted; and, pulling different ways, they came to a squabble in the middle of the fair, well nigh terminating in blows. Jem, however, found it necessary to succumb, but, to rid himself of restraint, decoyed

her into a dancing-booth, and there, in the press of people, contrived to slip away, leaving Doll to her own devices.

She had been looking round for some time, no less enraged than bewildered, when she was espied by Jack Rollin, who, glad to recognise an acquaintance, instantly stepped up to her.

"What away, Doll, be 'ee all by 'eeself?" he said. "There's your man Jem off to the cock-fight, down the brick-fiel'."

"He's a noice 'un," replied Doll, "but I ain't goin' to run arter him, don't 'ee b'lieve. What'll thee have to drink, lod?"

"Be thee goin' to treat us?"

"Ay, only say the word."

"Well, I don't know as I want nowght jist now; but I'll give 'ee a step, if 'ee loike to dance?"

"That's jist what I would; and so here goes." And she gave him her hand.

"Whoy, where did 'ee get this 'un from, Doll?" asked Jack, surveying her bracelet. "Dash me, if it don't shoine like real goold. Where did 'ee get 'un, lass?"

"Jim give 'un me. And don't think they be sham, for they'se the roight sart, I can tell 'ee—reglor goold."

"Ay, coold," said Jack, with a merry wink.

"No, goold."

"Well, well, I hope it be. But he owght to get the pair on 'em."

"And here it be," said Doll, raising her other wrist. She gave a start, adding, in troubled tones, "Whoy, blazes! where's it gone? Oh! Jack, lod, I'se drapped it!"

"What be thee cryin' about, wench?" cried Stuck, the constable, pushing up to her.

"I've drapped a bracelet—a goold 'un, jist loike this 'un," sobbed Doll.

"Have 'ee?" cried Stuck, with a com-

placent chuckle. "Well, don't 'ee cry, nevertheless, for if thou's got no more to cry for, this be safe enough. Come along wi' I, and I'll set it roight for 'ee."

"Will 'ee? Do 'ee know ony one as ha' pickt 'un up, mister? But I'll go along wi' yo'. Come on, Jack."

But Jack had disappeared.

Muttering an expression of discontent, Doll gave herself up to the guidance of Stuck, who led her through the fair, talking all the way about the bracelet, till, reaching the end of the village, they entered a narrow lane leading to the cage.

"My meate here picked un' up," observed Stuck, as they came in front of the penitential structure. "Just step in and see if they matches."

"No fear but it'll match, I'se awand yo'," answered Doll, following. "It maun be mine, I know."

"Hand out that bracelet as thee's picked up meate," said Stuck to his assistant, Progers, who was seated at the table. "Here be a lass as lay claim to 'un. Sit 'ee down, lass, nevertheless." As he spoke, Progers produced the lost bracelet.

"That's moine! I'll swear to 'un," cried Doll, eagerly.

"Let's look," said Stuck, raising both her hands. "Whoy, here be better bracelets nor them, and a better fit, too, as fur as I see."—And he dexterously slipped a handcuff over her wrist.

"Oh, gallus! murder!" screamed Doll.

A roar of laughter was the reply, as the two constables, seizing her now powerless arms, pushed her into an inner cell, locking and bolting the door behind.

"How did 'ee get hold an her?" asked Progers, while Doll kicked and screamed within.

"I found her looking about," replied Stuck, "and so I never lets on my spicions, but draws her up here, and now we's got her. It be proime sport, as ever I knowed, nevertheless."

"It's well as we see the name o' Belwood insoide."

"Yeez, but I maun look arter her man Jem now, for I heerd say as he were down the brick-fiel', a flarin' about with foive-pund notes. We must get 'un drunk, nevertheless, and then he's cotched easy. We can lug 'em both up afore Squoire Belwood to-morrow."

Opportunely for this project, Belwood returned home from London that evening. He scarcely spoke to Helen, who, in a strange distraction of love and dread, had been sorrowing at his protracted absence, and now trembled at his approach.

It had been her intention, in consequence of her conversation with Mr. Thornhill, to

speak to him again on the subject of avowing their marriage, as her equivocal position had now become insupportable; but when he appeared, her heart, which had seemed so resolute before, failed. His cold, stern look frightened her. It was clear that he was not only weary of her, but began to regard her as an odious incumbrance—to loathe and abhor her. How vain were her efforts to soothe, amuse, or please him! How fruitless her watchful gentleness, her tender and unreserved submission! Bitter thought! she had bartered the strong, inviolable protection of the law, the recognition of society, for such a miserable tenure as this!

Next morning, Belwood was even more irritable and morose; and she learnt, from a few chance words, that he had incurred heavy losses at play. He went away abruptly, leaving her to ponder more despairingly on her unhappy prospects.

An hour or two elapsed, when a servant entered, announcing that Mr. Belwood requested her attendance in the magistrate's room.

"Surely you must have misunderstood Mr. Belwood," replied Helen, at once surprised and alarmed. "Is any one else in the justice-room?"

"Yes, miss: there is some case on, I believe. As far as I could make out, it's one of the pit-people been thieving, and they say your gold bracelets has been found on him."

"How could he possibly have my bracelets?" replied Helen, in a suffocating voice. "But I must speak to Mr. Belwood here. Go back to him, and say I beg he will come to me."

She was pacing the room with a quick but unsteady step, when the servant returned.

"Master says, miss, I have made no mis-

take," she observed. "He cannot come to you, but you are to go to him immediately."

How she reached the justice-room it were hard to tell; but directly she entered, a glance around explained to her what had happened. At the foot of the table stood two prisoners, guarded by Stuck and his assistant;—and she had no difficulty in recognising one as her recent visitor, Black Jem.

"I am sorry you should have the trouble to come here, Miss Belwood," observed Mr. Basset, the clerk, placing her a chair. "Really, I think it is unnecessary—quite; and I fear you are not very well to-day."

Helen scarcely heard him. She wished, she said, to speak with Mr. Belwood alone.

"You must wait a minute," said Belwood, in reply. "And just look at these bracelets. Are they not the same you had presented to

Helen turned the trinkets over in her hand, examining them closely, as if, with her name engraved on the clasp, there could be any doubt of their identity. All eyes were upon her, but none with such a searching gaze as those of her husband and Black Jem, as she too keenly felt, and this redoubled her agitation.

"Why do you hesitate so?" asked Belwood, snappishly. "You must be satisfied they are yours."

"They *was* hern, I don't denoy," cried Jem, "but what I says——"

"Hold your tongue, sir," said Basset.

"Now, mister Jem, do 'ee keep quiet a bit, will 'ee, nevertheless?" interposed Stuck.

"I am waiting for your answer, Miss Belwood," said her husband, sternly.

Profound silence followed these words, broken by an impatient exclamation from the magistrate.

"Are those bracelets yours, madam, or are they not?" he angrily demanded.

"No," replied Helen, in a voice scarcely audible, "they are not mine."

"Not yours!"

There was a murmur of surprise.

"Look at them again," pursued Belwood; "Look at the clasp, and tell me what name is engraved on it?"

"Miss Belwood has no doubt overlooked that, sir," said Basset, deprecatingly. "Permit me, miss,"—and he turned the bracelet in her hand. "There is the name, you see—yours?"

"I tell 'ee," cried Black Jem, bursting all the restraints imposed by Stuck: "I tell 'ee there's oother things has names on 'em, too—*there's handkitchers*:" and he fastened his eyes on Helen. "I doant denoy as they *was* hern, but her gied 'em to me: *that's* it."

"Audacious!" exclaimed Basset.

"You hear what he says?—this worthy man, madam," said Belwood, with bitter irony. "Pray inform us if it is true, and we may save him and yourself any further trouble."

"I—I cannot answer you now," said Helen, pressing her hand on her heart, which was beating so wildly. "I am too ill, too unnerved, to enter into it to-day."

"What can you mean?" muttered Belwood, through his teeth.

"I see, Miss Belwood, you shrink from owning the bracelets from a natural but mistaken compassion," observed Basset. "Let me assure you the prisoners are wholly undeserving of it, being incorrigibly bad characters."

"The whole thing hangs on a word," cried Belwood, with a furious gesture. "The male prisoner says the bracelets were given to him, and given by Miss Belwood. We

have only to ascertain if this was the case."

"Her can't denoy it," cried Black Jem.

"You hear?" exclaimed Belwood. "Does he speak the truth?"

"Yes," said Helen, desperately.

"The case is dismissed, then," said Belwood. "There is nothing against the prisoners."

Helen, trembling and bewildered, with difficulty gained the door, but soon she reached a private room, and sinking in a chair, burst into tears.

CHAPTER II.

"My poor child," said Mrs. Grantley, kissing Millicent's forehead, as she slightly relaxed her embrace; "I can see, by your pale face, how you have suffered; and all for doing a good action. Yes, I partly know how it was, you see. So dry your eyes, dear, and be happy again. I came here on purpose to vindicate you, and now I have done that, I shall take you home."

"Dear, dear mamma, how can I thank you!" said Millicent, pressing her hand to her lips.

"I beg to say, madam," observed Miss Jumpsen, "that after seeing your friend's letter, I have no objection to continue Miss Rennel as my pupil: for though I cannot help thinking she has acted imprudently, I confess she appears to have been influenced by the best motives."

"I really wonder you can say so, sister," cried Jacintha, snappishly. "For my part, I do not see the slightest appearance of any such thing. But I am, and always was, the soul of frankness; and you must allow me to tell Mrs. Grantley that Miss Rennel has been perfectly unmanageable ever since she came here. It is melancholy to say this of a fellow-creature, madam," she added to Mrs. Grantley; "but though every word costs me a pang, I do assure you it is the case; and nothing should induce me to consent to Miss Rennel remaining. It is a duty we owe to

our friends that the children confided to our care should not be corrupted by her."

"Really, Miss Jacintha," exclaimed Susan, purple with anger and surprise, "I am perfectly astonished that you should think it necessary, when I am present, to express your sentiments in this manner."

"It is quite immaterial, madam," said Mrs. Grantley, with that cold, haughty look, which, in former times, had had such an effect on Millicent. I should not think of leaving my ward here any longer, and, indeed, it was my intention, though nothing of the kind had happened, to remove her next week, when the half year expires."

"I am sure, I am very glad to be rid of her," murmured Jacintha.

"Of course you will do as you please, madam," said Susan. "You will find, I trust, that Miss Rennel has been in no way

mention that our pasto[illegible]
Firebrass Dobbs."

"Indeed," said Mrs. [illegible]
you must hurry your t[illegible]
Miss Jumpsen will be so [illegible]
your luggage to be put u[illegible]
to show you from an ol[illegible]
must wait till we are in th[illegible]

"I will return instantl[illegible]
replied Millicent.

She was not long awa[illegible]
turn, everything being arra[illegible]
ley rose to depart. Millic[illegible]

that gentleness and docility so charming in a young girl, "I have to thank you for much kindness while I have been here."

Susan, who was really no ogress, touched by her address, as well as by the manner in which it was delivered, began to think she had very likely formed a wrong impression of her character.

"You have deserved what indulgence I have shown you, Miss Rennel," she said; "and I am sorry we are to part. Good-bye!"

"Good morning, Miss Jacintha," said Millicent.

"Oh! good morning to you!" answered the younger Jumpsen, turning her back.

"Come, my dear," said Mrs. Grantley.

She bent coldly to Susan, and, taking Millicent's hand, proceeded to the carriage, without deigning even a look at Jacintha.

Left to themselves, the two sisters sat for

some time in silence, Susan fretting at the tone assumed by Jacintha, which, as acknowledged chief manager of the concern, she considered impertinent, and even savouring of insubordination. Jacintha, on the other hand, had particular reasons for gratulation, having at last, by a skilful manœuvre, contrived to fix the wavering and sordid affections of Firebrass Dobbs, and they had absolutely appointed the day. She had, therefore, gladly availed herself of this occasion to precipitate a rupture with her sister, which she knew would ultimately be inevitable, conceiving that such a course would furnish a good excuse for withdrawing her share of the joint capital, while it would add to the *éclat* of her matrimonial triumph. The endless smile excited by her pleasing reverie, at length caused Susan to wax wroth.

"I cannot see, Miss Jacintha, that you have any especial reason to be pleased with

yourself," she said. "Your conduct this morning, I must tell you—your uncalled-for, unjustifiable interference—did you no credit. I am sure you will find no excuse for it in the Scriptures!"

"Psha, sister! how you talk!" cried Jacintha; "I have a right to speak, I think, as well as you, or what use am I here? I have been too long in a state of subjection—thraldom, I may say; and do not see why I should submit to it. Then, to drag in the Scriptures, too! What have the Scriptures to do with our school?"

"Everything! I should think—I should hope, they have everything to do with it, Miss Jacintha. You know that I make the Scriptures the rule and palladium of the school."

"I wish you would say less about them, and adhere more to what they teach."

"What do you mean?" cried Susan, turning very red.

"That your constant reference to the Scriptures is all talk—cant, in fact. People who have much religion are not so prone to talk about it."

"Well, I am sure, Miss Jacintha, you are improving—yes, very much. But let me assure you, I shall continue in the course of action I have adopted, in spite of your abuse, so long as we are together. *Ahem!*"

"That will not be very long."

"Perhaps not," returned Susan. "If you wish to retire from the establishment, I beg to say that you may do so as soon as you please—at a moment's notice, if you like. *Ahem!*"

"Oh, thank you! thank you! you are very good, I am sure. And I will just take you at your word, sister, for, in fact, I do wish to retire."

"You do?"

"Yes, for a particular reason—a very particular reason. He! he! it's very amusing, isn't it? But I do not desire to put you about—not at all; and, though you have only asked a moment's notice, I will give you a day—yes, a whole day. I will give you till twelve o'clock to-morrow, and then, if you please, I shall be glad to have my money."

"You are running on nicely," remarked Susan, a little staggered.

"No, but I shall now run off. And, mind! I shall require the money at twelve—at the hour of twelve; but you will hear more before that."

And, laughing merrily, Jacintha tripped out of the room.

Susan was puzzled. Such behaviour, though Jacintha had often been somewhat intractable, was unprecedented; and she knew

dissolve partnership. The
dispassionately, did not se
as she had been inclined to
contrary, indeed, there wer
to be derived from having
in her own hands, and she
no demur on the morrow, i
persist in her purpose.

Next morning, on takin
breakfast table, she was
that Jacintha had gone out
return for some hours. Po
could signify, it occurred
former occasion, that it wo

that precise instant, a shaky, nervous knock was heard at the door, heralding the arrival of no other than Dobbs himself.

Had not Susan been greatly preoccupied, she could scarcely have failed to remark something particularly fidgety in Dobbs's manner, usually so placid and majestic. In fact, the reverend gentleman stood in a very awkward situation, having come, by Jacintha's desire, to communicate tidings he instinctively felt would be very unwelcome—namely, his matrimonial engagement with her sister.

"Oh! my dear sir, I am so glad to see you," said Susan. "It is so strange, I was just wishing you were here. I am really in the greatest distress."

"It grieves me exceedingly to hear it," faltered Dobbs, with a terrible éclaircissement before his eyes. "Let me entreat you to compose yourself."

"Oh! Mr. Dobbs! my sister! my sister!"

"So she's found it out!" thought Dobbs, imagining an allusion to the intended marriage. "I was afraid, dear madam," he stammered forth, "the event might be disagreeable to you; but hope I shall be able to reconcile——"

"Never, never, Mr. Dobbs. It is impossible."

"But, my dear madam, it is our duty to——"

"Yes, yes, I know. The Scriptures tell us to forgive, and forgive her I do; but, oh! Mr. Dobbs, can I forget?—can I ever forget?"

"I trust your anger does not extend to me, dear madam?"

"No, no! Why should it? My feelings towards you are indeed very different."

Dobbs gasped convulsively.

"Such a good sister as I have been to her, too!" pursued Susan, wiping her eyes.

"You have, indeed," said Dobbs; "and so, I hope, you will continue to be. It shall be my constant aim to cultivate and improve this good understanding—this amiable interchange of affection, which you must permit me to participate." And he took her hand fraternally. "Yes, me—me, who have so long aspired to this privilege."

"Can it be coming?" thought Susan; and she murmured, "dear, dear sir!"

"I confess, you may have been somewhat unprepared for such an event," pursued Dobbs; "but though you may not have observed any marked predilection in my manner, you cannot surely have been unconscious of the nature of my feelings, during the last few weeks. My attachment, I assure you, is of the most devoted kind."

"I believe it," was the almost inarticulate reply.

"Matrimony," resumed Dobbs—and Su-

san felt a galvanic shock—"matrimony is a condition peculiarly adapted to clergymen, though the Papists, ever since the passing of the Popish Relief Bill, have been doing all in their power to compel clergymen to remain single."

"How abominable!" cried Susan.

"But you, my dear Miss Jum—— or my dear Susan, as you must now let me call you —you will not countenance such a wicked design?"

"Never! never!"

"Then you give me your consent—your kind, willing, unreserved consent?"

"My dearly beloved Firebrass!" exclaimed Susan, sinking into his arms.

"But—but," exclaimed the agitated Dobbs, in the height of perplexity: "but, my dear——"

"Sweet name," lisped Susan.

"My dear madam," jerked out Dobbs.

"No, call me, Susan, as you said you would—*your* Susan; for all I possess is yours."

Dobbs pricked up his ears: Jacintha, more alive to contingencies, had stipulated for a settlement.

"I was about to observe, my dearest madam," he said, suddenly altering his tone, "that had I had any conception—had I dared for a moment to hope, that you were so favourably disposed towards me, I should now be one of the happiest men on earth, instead of the most miserable. But the fact is, entertaining towards you those sentiments I have this morning suffered to appear, and fearing that I should never obtain your affections, I resolved, at least, to claim you as a sister; and in an evil hour I proposed to Jacintha."

Susan drew back, speechless with astonishment.

"But," continued Firebrass, breathlessly,

"happily it is not yet too late. Only give your consent, and, to prevent any interference from Jacintha, we can go this instant down to the church, where I will send for the curate and clerk, and celebrate our marriage at once."

Susan made no reply, but kept her eyes on the floor, in deep meditation.

"Come, my dear Susan, let it be yes," urged Dobbs, in his most insinuating manner.

Susan heaved a sigh.

"Say yes," pursued Dobbs; "for remember, everything is yet to be arranged, and we are losing precious time. It will soon be twelve o'clock."

"I consent," cried Susan, with a start. "Jacintha is to return at twelve."

Jacintha did not make her appearance, however, till an hour afterwards. She did not inquire for Susan, but having ascer-

tained that Dobbs had made his promised call, seated herself in the parlour, and calmly prepared for a scene.

It was some little time before Susan entered, still wearing her bonnet and shawl. To increase Jacintha's surprise, she was also arrayed in smiles.

"So you have been out, sister," cried Jacintha. "I hope you have arranged at the bank for the payment of my money."

"Yes, my dear. Here is the draft for it."

Jacintha giggled as she took up the cheque, though her face became scarlet.

"Pray how long is it, sister, since you began to sign yourself Susan Dobbs?" she asked, hysterically.

"About an hour, Miss Jacintha, when I became the wife of our pastor and master, the Reverend Firebrass Dobbs, A.M. *Ahem!*"

"*You* became his wife? I can tell you this is no subject for jesting, sister."

"And do you call it a jest?" cried Susan, throwing down a paper. "I may be wrong, but, in my eyes, this looks very like a marriage certificate."

"You wretch!" exclaimed Jacintha, with gnashing teeth. "But I will be revenged on you both. I'll bring an action for damages."

And she rushed out of the room.

CHAPTER III.

The carriage door was shut; the post-boy was in his saddle; and away flew the willing horses, bearing Millicent home. Mrs. Grantley, as if fearing to lose her again, still held her hand, every moment pressing it fondly.

Millicent's heart so overflowed with happiness, that, at first, she was unable to speak.

"How kind this is of you, dear mamma," she said, at length. "And yet I was frightening myself so, and thinking you would be angry, and perhaps not forgive me. How wicked it was of me, was it not?"

"Very," answered Mrs. Grantley, with an affectionate smile. "Very wicked."

"And you have made me so happy—so inexpressibly happy," pursued Millicent.

"Ah! now you are good again," returned Mrs. Grantley; "now I forgive you—and the sooner, as it is impossible to resist those appealing looks. You have grown a perfect little captivator, Milly."

"You do not really think so, dear mamma?" said Millicent, as if there were something sinister in the imputation.

"Yes, positively."

"What can I do to convince you I am not?"

"Why, it would require you to give up so much, and to do such impossible things, that I must, I suppose, even be content with you as you are. Now I have you again, I wonder how I could ever have parted with you."

"Dear mamma!"

"I shall not let you go again, Milly, but keep you with me always, as I have often wished you to be; for indeed, dear child, I have felt your absence severely. And now we shall be so industrious. Indeed, I have such a quantity of business laid out for you, that I don't know when you will get through it."

"I will labour incessantly till it is done."

"But you will have very little time," resumed Mrs. Grantley, with her playful smile; "for intending all along that you should come home next week, I have engaged a governess for you, and, no doubt, she will keep you fully employed. But I am forgetting your old friend's letter—Mr. Thornhill's. Here it is."

Millicent eagerly read the letter, which, agreeably to Thornhill's promise, explained

away the impropriety of her clandestine meeting with Helen.

"Thereby hangs a tale," said Mrs. Grantley, as Millicent finished the perusal.

"And a very, very sad one, mamma," answered Millicent. "But as I am pledged not to divulge it, I must not say more even to you."

"I have no wish to know it, dear, unless I could avert some sorrow from this little heart, so full of love and kindness for every one. The Almighty alone can do that, and I pray that He may ever keep my child, and make your future peaceful and happy."

Thus they continued to converse, and, borne rapidly along, never heeded their progress, till, after a few hours, they arrived at Winstone.

The old manor-house, of which little more than walls had been left, was completely re-

stored, and presented but few traces of the fire. When they alighted, they found the same old servants in the porch, from the housekeeper downwards, all, whatever might be their secret feelings, eager to pay every outward respect to Millicent.

Mrs. Grantley's quantity of business, which was to be so harassing, turned out to be either mere amusement, or, what Millicent liked better—ministering to the sick and needy. Then, to vary occupations, there was the flower-garden to be attended to, as also Miss Trueman, her governess, who duly arrived, making Millicent as blithe as a bird. More than all, she was constantly with her kind benefactress, loved so tenderly and so devotedly, watching her wants, anticipating her wishes, surrounding her every hour with new and more endearing tokens of respect, gratitude, and affection.

Thus Millicent passed nearly twelve

months, and would have been content to pass her life. A painful source of reflection, indeed, sometimes occurred to her, amidst her otherwise perfect happiness, and that was, a seeming decline in Mrs. Grantley's health. What her quick eye discovered so early, ultimately became apparent to others, and, at length, Mrs. Grantley sought medical advice, and was recommended to try the effect of a sojourn at Brighton.

Millicent had now completed her education, and released from the control of a governess, on the morning of her eighteenth birthday, set out with Mrs. Grantley for the fashionable watering-place, there to make her entry into the gay world.

CHAPTER IV.

Brighton was never more thronged with visitors. It seemed that the great city, after holding fast by the children of Mammon all the summer, now, in the autumn of its discontent, poured all its notables into Kemp Town. Certainly London was empty, and Brighton overflowing.

Millicent was on the pier with Mrs. Grantley, scanning the noble expanse of wave and sky, and enjoying the fine breeze, when a small hand was laid on her arm, and turning, she discovered Fanny Raymond.

"My dearest Milly! I knew it must be you," said Fanny. "How happy I am to meet you."

Millicent was equally pleased, answering her salutation most warmly.

"But, you wild girl, you have not come out here alone, have you?" she added.

"No," laughed Fanny, "though I have, as you know, done things quite as imprudent before now. But there is my uncle—there! shaking his telescope at me, don't you see?"

Millicent looked round, and a venerable-looking elderly gentleman, on the other side of the pier, raised his hat. She acknowledged the salute, at the same time presenting Fanny to Mrs. Grantley.

"I have heard of you very often," said Mrs. Grantley, taking Fanny's hand; "and, you may be sure, in a manner which made me desirous of knowing you. But, pardon my asking, is that your uncle? for I knew a

gentleman once, many years ago, who very much resembled him; but his name was Webster."

"So is my uncle's,—Sir Charles Webster," replied Fanny; "and doubtless it is the same. I must bring him to you."

But Sir Charles was already coming forward, having recognised Mrs. Grantley, and they were soon in familiar conversation. It may well be supposed that, thus left to themselves, neither Millicent nor Fanny lost many moments.

"How fortunate it is, you have just come in time for the grand ball!" said Fanny. "You have had an invitation, of course?"

"No, nor have I heard of it before," replied Millicent. "We are living very retired, as mamma's health is so delicate; and we do not know any one here."

"Oh! yes, you do! You know me, and I am some one, I think."

"Decidedly," smiled Millicent, "and, indeed, I would rather know you than all the others together."

"And it is precisely for that reason, and because you are the best little Milly in existence, that you shall go to the ball. Now don't smile so incredulously, and shake your head, for, I tell you, I am resolved upon it, and you know I am sadly wilful. The truth is, I have settled the whole business in my own mind already."

"And notwithstanding this, I do not even know yet where the ball is to be," said Millicent.

"And I can hardly tell you, except that it is given by a very rich man named Mandeville Harley. But what ails you, Milly? You have turned *so* pale!"

"It was a sad thought crossed me, but it is gone now," answered Millicent, who, indeed, on hearing his name, involuntarily recurred to the moment when she had appeared before Harley as a criminal.

"You strange child!" exclaimed Fanny. "But you have been moping too much, and I must now get you out of it: so I will just arrange it with my uncle."

"No, no! pray do not!"

But the laughing girl broke away, and a few words won adhesion from the Judge, who, at her request, immediately nogotiated the affair with Mrs. Grantley.

"There," said Fanny, turning triumphantly to Millicent, "an invitation will be procured, and you are to go with me and my chaperone, Lady Gresham."

"Well, I must thank you now, Fanny," said Millicent, "which I do most sincerely;

for, since it is decided, I confess I should like to go, more particularly as you will be with me."

"It will be so pleasant!" cried Fanny, her eyes sparkling delight; "though nothing, I believe, will divert you more than our own chaperone, who is one of the greatest oddities you ever met. She is such an inveterate whist-player, you must know, that her imagination is positively chained to the cards; and, no matter what you are speaking of, she constantly squares everything by an oracle of her own, named Hoyle, who, I believe, actually wrote a book on whist!"

"I hope you are not quizzing her. You know, I am aware of your talent that way, and also how you are given to use it."

"Incredulous! Am I not now as grave as a Judge?—graver, if my uncle be a specimen; for, you see, he is in high glee! But

we shall not be troubled with her ladyship much, except, perhaps, when we are *en train*, and she has occasion to caution us against a poor partner; for if there is anything she abhors, it is poverty."

"I am sure you are colouring the picture —turning it into a caricature. I must not listen to such a libeller: so pray don't worry her ladyship any longer."

"You are as demure as ever, I declare," laughed Fanny. "You ought to be a Quakeress, Milly; and if you would only set up in that department, with help of a prim cap, and your grave, reproving looks, you would make converts of all the beaux. But look! look! do look there! Do you see that little mannikin?"

"Yes," cried Millicent, as her eye fell on a diminutive, undergrown boy, with a very large head and odious physiognomy, and

whose remarkable ugliness was rendered more conspicuous by the dandyism of his habiliments, announcing him to be a gentleman's tiger. "What a curiosity!"

"A monster, you mean!" said Fanny, with a smile; "and such he calls himself, answering to the appropriate *soubriquet* of Caliban. But can you guess who is his master?"

"How should I?"

"Your first love, Oswald—young Mr. Harper, I should say, who was so desperately smitten with you at school."

"Or with you—which? You know I did not encourage his addresses, and he was never absolutely off with you."

"Hush!" said Fanny, with heightened colour, "here he comes; let us be talking of something else."

Oswald, who had just espied them, and

recognised Millicent, soon came up, arrayed in Stulz's best, and booted by Hoby. It was easy to see that he had become a miracle of refinement.

"You will be pleased to hear, Mr. Harper, that Miss Rennel perfectly recollects you," said Fanny, after the usual greetings.

"Really it is very obliging of her," returned the *élégante*. "I feel extremely flattered."

"I cannot allow you to give me so much credit, Mr. Harper," answered Millicent. "You know I must always remember our teacher, Miss Withers, so cannot forget you."

"Ah! true, the lovely Sarah!" cried Fanny, with a gay laugh. "Do you still persevere in that quarter, Mr. Harper?"

"Laugh at me—laugh away!" said Os-

wald, joining in their merriment; "I thought I should expire with laughing myself, when I first discovered it, though, to speak frankly, I think you were rather severe with me."

"You must really not include me in your censure, Mr. Harper," said Millicent; "for, believe me, I was not an accomplice in the deception."

"No, I am aware of that," returned Oswald. "I must do Miss Raymond the justice to say she has long exonerated you."

"There, you traitress," cried Fanny.— "You see how generous I have been, taking all the blame on myself, though, I am sure, no one could have suspected me. But, to be serious a moment, are you going to the ball, Mr. Harper?"

"To be sure. Every one is going, and you, too, I should hope."

"Oh! we are included, of course. But what I wish to know is, can you tell us anything about our host. Who is he?"

"What, Mandeville Harley? Oh! he's a nabob, or a Jew, I don't know which; but he has found a gold mine, I believe. People swear by him."

"Really! But you are not one of his votaries, I hope? What are you laughing at, Milly? Oh! the monster! Ha! ha!"

Oswald swung round, and discovered his dandy tiger, the graceless Caliban, close at his heels, with head thrown back, and hand on hip, in ridiculous imitation of himself.

"What are you all starin' at?" growled the monster.

"That's enough," returned Oswald. "Go! you're discharged."

"Well, I hope you'll give me a character," rejoined Caliban.

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"You rascal!" cried Os

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"only a scene with Caliban out of the 'Tempest,' with Mr. Harper for Prospero."

And she recounted what had occurred, n her own felicitous and naive manner, to the great amusement of the Judge and Mrs. Grantley, as well as of Oswald and Millicent. The conversation then became general, and after some time, the friends separated, and Mrs. Grantley and Millicent returned to their emporary residence in the Grand Parade.

Day passed; and in the evening, Mrs. Grantley entered the drawing-room, where Millicent was reading, and presented her a ard and letter.

"Here is the invitation, Milly," she said; ' and a note from Lady Gresham to me, undertaking to be your chaperone."

"Oh! that is delightful," replied Millicent; ' and everything is so agreeable—is it not,

mamma? I am only sorry you will not be with me."

"Do not think of that, my dear. I have stood aloof from general society so long, it would now be distasteful to me, rather than pleasant. I hope it will be all sunshine to my Milly."

"That cannot be, mamma, when you are not present."

"But you shall have something to remind you of me," said Mrs. Grantley, with a loving smile; "something I wore myself at your age, and have lately had prepared for you. See, Milly."—And opening a jewel-box, she displayed a suit of diamonds.

"Oh! how splendid! how magnificent!" exclaimed Millicent, transported with admiration. "What can I say to thank you, my dear, dearest benefactress!"

Mrs. Grantley warmly returned her caresses.

"Only let me see them on you, Milly," she said.

Soon her wish was gratified; and Millicent, looking up, saw her sylph-like figure reflected in a mirror—radiant with sparkling gems, which flashed back the light—still more radiant in its own peerless beauty, glowing with a woman's pride, vivacity, and tenderness.

CHAPTER V.

It was the night of the ball. Busy, self-sufficient Figaros, nervously awaited by numberless Belindas, flew from house to house, freighted with pomatum and curling-tongs; ladies'-maids were at premium, and took on temporary helpers; ladies themselves were in the most delightful flutter imaginable.

Out of doors, all was activity and commotion. Carriages blocked up the road; coachmen were swearing and tearing; lac-queys hallooing; and foot passengers keepi

a watchful eye over their lives. All Brighton was astir.

A glare of ruddy light marked the marine residence of Mr. Mandeville Harley. The spacious porch was lined with servants; the magnificent suite of rooms, thrown open for the evening, were already filled with company. Not only worshippers of Mammon, but men of genius and renown, whose high natures no sordid or unworthy motive could influence — with titled dames and lovely spinsters, soldiers, statesmen, and senators, tufts, toadies, and nabobs, crowded the saloon, the drawing-rooms, and the conservatories. A flood of brilliant light poured from chandeliers and lustres, crowned with flowers, and was reflected in superb mirrors, reaching from floor to ceiling. The band of Weippert, alternating with the deep tones of the piano, played by the practised hand

of Dulcken, performed the most melodious and charming pieces, which rang the air with harmony. And troops of young and joyous beauties, of every variety of style, heightened and brought out by every aid of art, and glittering in splendid costumes, swept gracefully by, completing a scene that looked like enchantment.

Dazzled by a sight so new, yet charmed, gladdened, almost inspired, Millicent, guided by her experienced chaperone, advanced to pay her respects to the hostess, who, not naturally arrogant, and overpowered by so many constellations, bore her honours with Duncan's meekness. Then commenced Millicent's tutelage; and Lady Gresham, as Fanny had predicted, was not unmindful of her favourite oracle.

"You are entering a field of triumphs, my dearest love, I am sure," she said to Milli-

cent; "for you look perfectly irresistible. So pray be very, very, very choice. Above all, do not, I entreat you, give the least encouragement to scorpions. *They're not Hoyle!*"

"Indeed, madam," answered Millicent. "But pray will you tell me what scorpions are; for I have never heard of them before?"

"Oh! fye! You ought to know they are younger sons, who have nothing to look to but the Church, or some government appointment, or, what is far worse, a stipend from their elder brother—a sort of parochial allowance. Not at all Hoyle, I assure you."

"I have given a half-promise to Mr. Harper, Lady Gresham," said Fanny Raymond; "and, I see, he is coming to claim it."

"Very well, my love. He is Hoyle—heir to a baronetcy and eight thousand per

annum. You are quite safe there."—As these words were uttered, Lady Gresham was accosted by a gentleman, with whom she conversed a moment aside.—" Do you dance, Miss Rennel ?" she then said.

" I shall be very happy."

" Miss Rennel!—Mr. Vavasour!"

VAVASOUR ! How the blood rushed to Millicent's cheeks!—it was the maiden name of Mrs. Grantley.

A man standing apart, at the other side of the room, watched her motions with the deepest interest.

" Contemplation sweet and mild," said a voice behind him. " Why, Belwood, you are absolutely rapt. But, ma foi! who is that glorious creature ?"

" I should have thought your lordship, who knows everybody, would hardly have to inquire," answered Belwood, with a com-

placent smile, "yet, perhaps, I am the only one here who can tell. There is a strange story connected with her."

"Ha! No scandal about Queen Elizabeth, I hope?"

"Oh, no! but still it is a secret."

"Then, pray don't tell it to me; for I shall doubtless hear it from a dozen people in the course of the evening, and would rather not hasten the infliction. What's her name?"

"Rennel—Miss Millicent Rennel."

"Millicent!" echoed Lord Childars—"an odd name enough. But who is her partner? His name is Pride, I should think—probably a descendant of Oliver's Colonel."

"Ha! ha! no. He's a Vavasour—heir to the Vavasours of Earl's Court, a very old family, who came over, I believe, with the Conqueror."

"Perhaps, he considers himself the Conqueror," said Lord Childars, "but I hope I shall be able to match him. At all events, I must get presented to the lady."

"And I will engage to take her away from you both," returned Belwood.

"Psha!"

"Will your lordship bet on it?"

"I would if she were a horse, but being a lady, you must excuse me. But Pride is bending, I see. Ye gods! he deigns to speak."

Vavasour, indeed—haughty, imperious, possessing all the inherent pride of his race, fostered and confirmed by education, habit and example—had yet been sensibly impressed by Millicent's beauty, so fresh in tone, so striking in the grace of motion. Gradually his high look relaxed; his cold but handsome features brightened; his

studied indifference vanished; and, like another Cymon, he became for the moment animated, courtly, and gay.

Millicent, recovered from her momentary confusion, as she moved with buoyant step through the dance, her cheek glowing with the admiration she excited—her heart swelling with happy triumph, caught a new spirit from the scene.

"What a crowd we have to-night!" observed Vavasour. "It is a Gathering of the Clans at the sound of Weippert's pibroch."

"Then should we not dance the Caledonians?" said Millicent.

"Ah! you deal in *mots*. Now, I wish to be very complimentary; and yet I really cannot say of your wit, what Moore says of Sheridan's, that it ne'er carries a heart-stain

away on its blade. Yours must have many hearts to answer for?"

"Only my own, I assure you."

"But that is the Queen of Hearts."

"No! no! A Queen should have a realm, and a moderate array of subjects, but I must disclaim having either."

"Can you say so, conscientiously? Look around and tell me."

"I am the monarch of all I survey," said Millicent, glancing at her tiny foot.

"It is an empire Alexander would have envied."

"How you are wandering from your subject—from music to history, or perhaps, I ought to say, Æsop's Fables."

"They amount to the same thing now-a-days; but in this instance I am asserting a brilliant fact, and claim the adhesion of the

Muses. But how the moments have fled! Is it possible the quadrille can be over?"

Belwood still watched them, his keen grey eye gleaming malignantly, in union with the dark passions reigning in his bosom.

Three years of dissipation, prodigality, and guilty indulgence, reckless of all principle and all consequences, had fearfully developed his vicious nature, previously lost to every good feeling, and seared by the ravages of excess. Already the large property inherited from his father had been sensibly diminished; and, as embarrassments increased, he looked with more and more repugnance on Helen, now, in one point of view, an insurmountable obstacle to the restoration of his fortunes. Then rose in his mind a project long shadowed out, though only crudely, but now given a clear and positive shape—of acting as though a marriage had never taken

place—of disavowing it, if publicly asserted by Helen, and forming a new alliance, expressly to recruit his shattered finances. Hardly was the design finally adopted, when accident brought him in contact with a lady duly qualified, and who herself not devoid of personal attractions, soon learnt to favour one eminently handsome, and, apparently, devoted to her.

As he moved along, proposing to present himself to Millicent, the doomed heiress stood before him.

"Miss Clinton!" he cried, with affected rapture. "This is a pleasure I did not anticipate. I was not aware you were coming to Brighton."

"Neither was I, till just before we set out," answered the lady. "Mamma hurried me so, without saying why or wherefore; but now we are a little settled, I like the

place pretty well. How fortunate you happen to be here!"

"May I flatter myself that you really think so? In that case, I shall consider it fortunate indeed."

"Will you now? Well, you know I do. I am quite glad."

"Who is that gentleman, Harriet?" asked a crabbed old lady, without looking up.

"Why, Mr. Belwood, mamma—don't you see?"

"I hope you are quite well, Mrs. Clinton?" said Belwood. "This meeting is as pleasant as unexpected."

Mrs. Clinton, who was the young lady's step-mother, and vested, during minority, with the additional powers of guardianship, evidently did not view it in the same light, considering Belwood a troublesome interloper, likely to frustrate a plan she had

formed, on family considerations, of marrying Harriet to her own nephew.

"I did not suppose we should meet any one here, except our own friends," she replied, coldly, with a significant stress on the last word.

"Ah! you have friends everywhere," returned Belwood, shirking her inuendo. "But they are forming another quadrille. May I have the honour of——"

"My niece is engaged, sir," interrupted Mrs. Clinton. "You know, you are to dance with Dudley, Harriet.

"No, I am not, mamma—I am not, indeed. Am I, Dud?"

"No, Har-yot," replied Dudley, who was a hopeless soft.

"How can you say so, Dudley. When I told you all day she was to be your partner,

and it was fully understood between you? You know it was."

"Yes, aunt."

"But you don't care about it, Dud," said Harriet, coaxingly; "and you will let me dance with Mr. Belwood, I am sure—won't you?"

"Yes, Har-yot," replied the obliging Dudley, whose ambition was to sit quiet, and look on.

It was time to move forward; and Belwood, professing to think the matter decided, did not wait for any further intervention from Mrs. Clinton.

"You are looking at that lady, whom every one seems to admire so," said Harriet, as they placed themselves. "Do you know who she is?"

"Very well," answered Belwood, "though

I have not spoken to her yet, this evening. Her name is Rennel."

"Indeed. Do you think her very pretty?"

"She is passable, but certainly no beauty," answered Belwood.

"Well, that *is* curious; for I was just saying to mamma I wondered what people saw in her, as she seems to me, in spite of her finery, to be just like a dressed-up doll. It is true, she has a good complexion, but when you have said that, you've said all."

"And a little rouge will give any one that," said Belwood.

"Oh! you spiteful thing! how can you make such cutting remarks? It is quite wicked of me to laugh, I am sure."

"Well, every one has his own taste, you know, and, for my part, I prefer the bright, clear lily to the rose. There can be no de-

ception with that, as, if I may be bold to say it, there can be none in your case."

"Ah! you say this to flatter me. That is your way, mamma says."

"I am no favourite with your mamma, and so she misrepresents me; but I trust, Miss Clinton, you will regard me more kindly."

"Oh, yes! or I should be very ungrateful, remembering how kind you are to me. But mamma is so horrid—I quite hate her. She is always teazing me about Dud so."

"What, that rhinoceros? How ridiculous! Does she think such a lovely creature as you, admired and sought by every one, would throw yourself away on him?"

"Yes, she wants me to marry him."

"Inhuman! But I hope you will not suffer yourself to be persuaded by her—sacrificed, I should say."

"Never."

Encouraged by the turn of the conversation, Belwood, already resolved to lose no time, debated whether he should now urge on his own suit, but though not exactly green, the fruit seemed hardly ripe.

"Look at the beauty now," resumed Harriet. "How absurd her partner makes himself, paying such open attentions. Do you know who he is, Mr. Belwood?"

"Yes, Lord Childars."

"One of the poor lords, I suppose, and a little attracted by her diamonds; but he will probably find all is not gold that glitters."

"Now it is you who are severe. I assure you Lord Childars is very rich, and very much sought after; but I fancy, from what I have seen of him, that he has more money than wit."

"So I should say, judging from his taste—

—Dear me! here is mamma. Is it not provoking?"

"Confoundedly," muttered Belwood.

"Come, Harriet," said Mrs. Clinton, as she came up; "you will fatigue yourself, child, and that is against all orders. There's poor Dudley, too, so grieved at your neglect, you must come and talk to him—you must, indeed, dear."

And bending to Belwood, she led the unwilling girl away.

Belwood was not much distressed, being desirous to join Millicent, for whom, indeed, at that moment (so volatile and unsteady was his disposition, and so completely was he fascinated by her appearance), he would cheerfully have resigned Harriet altogether. He felt, however, that such a diversion of his attentions would not compromise him with Harriet, who, however piqued, would be

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She turned to Lord C

CHAPTER VI.

WITH eyes flashing fire, Belwood turned round, and beheld Vavasour, whose looks were rivetted on the receding figure of Millicent.

"There goes the belle of the evening, Mr. Vavasour," said Belwood, "and how few here could dream her history! Would you believe, seeing her decked out in gems, as she now is, that she was formerly a trap-girl in my coal-mine?"

"A what?" answered Vavasour, with a start.

"One of the workpeople in my colliery."

"Impossible!"

"Still it is true. She left us, suddenly, in a very mysterious way, to go out as a servant. And now she is—you see!—a fine lady!"

"You amaze me! And yet I cannot help thinking you are under a mistake. You surely confound her with some other person! Indeed, it must be so; for not only her beauty, but her brilliant conversation, her wit, her innocence, more conspicuous in a mind which has evidently received the highest culture, are all marks of good birth, as well as of breeding. You are—you must be mistaken, sir!"

"Then, am I mistaken in myself—in you—in everything I see, hear, and feel. No, my dear sir. What I have told you is as true as the sky overhead—as the sun in the

heavens; but truth, you should remember, is sometimes stranger than fiction. However, I can account for this girl's elevation, as well as disclose her origin. Not to tire your patience, I will just tell you that she has been adopted by a widow, who is very rich, and a near relation of your own."

"Of mine?"

"Yes, your aunt, though I believe there is some alienation between you—Mrs. Grantley, of Winstone Manor."

"Mrs. Grantley! Well, sir, I am much obliged to you for your information, which, I confess, I should not like to have missed. You may rely on my keeping it a profound secret."

There was something of a gibe in the last word, uttered as he turned away, not, however, without showing that he was exces-

sively annoyed. That reflection was unction to Belwood.

Vavasour, indeed, was mortified—hurt in the tenderest sensibility, his pride. To this colliery girl (for he felt that Belwood's narration was strictly true)—to this base-born nameless adventuress—at best, the child of misguided bounty, he had been on the point of enslaving himself—devoting his love, his heart, his honour. How nigh he had been to destruction!—to bringing a stigma, an everlasting, indelible slur, on his name and race!

Still she flitted before him—bright as morning, soft as eve—a siren, a false Medea, besetting him with enchantments. And yet—no! this he could not say; it was deceiving, deluding himself—conjuring up a vain and idle chimera. Millicent, far from seeking to

ensnare him, was gone, and, to all appearance, had forgotten him, resigning herself wholly to another. And now, in spite of his better judgment, drawn by a resistless, overpowering attraction, he followed—another Antony, inflamed alike by anger, jealousy, and love.

He entered the lofty conservatory, flocked with gay and delighted guests, revelling with unmixed enjoyment in the free play of air, here cooled by fountains, and rich with the incense of flowers. His eye sought out Millicent, and by her side stood Lord Childars, listening with rapt brow to her voice, he knew too well how sweet. And the Peer's slightly-inclined head, downcast but expressive look, so full of respect, of esteem, of devotion—what a revelation did they present to an eye so spell-bound! They spoke,

indeed, of feelings deep, lasting, unutterable—not admiration, not love, but worship.

Nothing tends so much to stimulate and foster the tender passion, in its first stages, as the apparent progress of a competitor, and in exciting this fruitful germ of jealousy lies woman's most dangerous prerogative. Though exercised unconsciously by Millicent, it now subdued Vavasour, at the same time infecting him with an eager spirit of rivalry, and, by force of example, making him look less severely, less loathingly, on the strange circumstances of her previous history.

Thus he slowly advanced, though with half-averted gaze, ashamed of the feelings he could not resist. Millicent, engaged by her companion, did not perceive his approach.

Lord Childars was directing her attention to three of the most remarkable characters of

the day—Representative Men, indeed (though two of them, alas! have since been removed from the wide sphere of their usefulness), who were grouped round Lady J——.

"That tall, massive man, with his arm thrown behind, as he stands in the House of Commons, is Sir R—— P——," he remarked; and it was not difficult to discern, from his sparkling eye and glowing cheek, that the speaker was one of those sterling few who, in every vicissitude of the times, placed their whole faith and reliance in the great statesman. "At your first glance you would take him for a gladiator, so towering is his form, so inflexible his attitude. Thus he has stood when meeting the assaults of an enraged party, when defending his principles against a senate, when controlling the madness of a nation. You see how calm his face is!—how imperturbable! and yet, as you

look, what a depth seems to open to you! You can almost realise, for an instant, the cold, passive impress and immense thoughtfulness of the Egyptian sphinx, which thousands of years have not deadened on the stone. It is a glimpse of the mind within—a momentary flash, showing man in his proudest prime, the spirit that rules a world. And now you look again, the soul has hid itself; and all seems hushed, and fixed, and unbending."

"You sketch him as a friend, Lord Childars," said Millicent, "and yet truthfully. You might be the Griffith for his epitaph."

"I speak as one of his party—his own party, and, even though knowing him only in his public character, you may indeed well call us his friends. In his reverses and in his triumphs—when the world has railed, and when it has admired—we have been the

same to him, steadfast and true as himself. So much could never be said of any other politician; and, in time to come, no other, perhaps, will ever rise to command such sway. And he has had our support because he has bribed and purchased us—not with sordid gold, but with the incorruptible coin of patriotism. But I weary you."

"Oh, no! your theme and your words alike interest me. Go on, pray, Lord Childars. You seem to call up before me one of those masters of the past, whose mighty figures fill the niches of history."

"They are shadows compared with P——, whose genius has changed the destinies of mankind. One moment he draws a sponge of mercy over the law, effacing its characters of blood, and making its yoke freedom. Then he attacks the hydra of corruption, and drives it, howling and furious, from the

land. He unlocks the prison of the debtor, opens new fields of labour to the poor, knocks off the fetters of the slave. He breaks down the barriers of sectarian tyranny; gives health and stability to the national finances, unrestricted commerce to the merchant, security, prosperity, and peace, to the people. This is the work he has done for England, the example he holds up to the governors of the earth."

"A holy work, and a divine example!" exclaimed Millicent. "You have taught me, Lord Childars, that we need not look to antiquity for heroic models, when our own happy country possesses such a statesman."

"He has other claims to your veneration, more than I can now enumerate. This Cicero in eloquence, this Decius in patriotism, has the tastes and munificent disposition of Mecænas. With one hand, he caresses

literature and science; with the other, showers his bounty on Art. Of his more private virtues I will not speak: they are exemplary, but they are sacred."*

* It is since these lines were written that the great statesman whom they feebly depict has been snatched from amongst us, leaving a blank no time can fill up. Never, at any period of our annals, has a public character been so deeply lamented, or public virtue so universally acknowledged. Monuments have been designed to his memory in every quarter, but what memorial can equal that erected by himself, in the economy, the laws, the history of the nation? It seems that such men are raised up for a purpose, and when their mission is accomplished, suddenly removed. Trafalgar received the last breath of Nelson; and Peel, whose battle-ground was the Senate, died as signally, by a visitation almost as sudden.——

> One fatal blow, a lightning stroke,
> Has shiver'd the majestic oak:
> Its stately trunk is overthrown—
> Its strength, its pride, its beauty gone.
>
> Afar is heard a nation's cry
> Up rising to the startled sky—
> And England does not weep alone,
> For Europe echoes back her moan.
>
> With stricken hearts, o'ercharged with grief,
> We mourn our great and honour'd chief:
> But, oh! it soothes, consoles to find
> The burden shared by all mankind.

Sir Robert is address
thing so winning in
health and intelligen
kindliness, and his e
his silver white hair t
a slight, a scarcely pe
form; but I should say
every feature, his mind
of youth."

"I showed you the
replied Lord Childars
you have discovered i
sesses the monster leve
of. That is Mr. W——

great, but I associated it with philanthropy. Now I shall lose my reputation as a physiognomist."

"Not at all. Mr. W—— is renowned for his sympathies with the poor, especially with the industrious working man, and, through the medium of his mighty journal, has done more to ameliorate their condition, by calling public attention to their wrongs and their sufferings, than any person living. He has also advocated their cause in Parliament, and identified himself in every way with their interests."

"Then I was right in my conjecture!"

"Perfectly; and you will doubtless form the same conclusion about the gentleman now speaking. It is Lord A——."

"There is no mistaking his kind, benevolent, impressive look," said Millicent. "You feel at once that his mission is religion and

charity. But may we not draw nearer to them ?"

" Undoubtedly."

The little group—for the brilliant Lady J—— was not a mere listener—were canvassing a topic then just in agitation, and possessing an overpowering interest for Millicent—the question of female labour in mines. She heard the horrors of the hideous system vividly described by Mr. W——, in a voice singularly harmonious, and which those it once addressed could never forget—she listened with breathless attention, with a beating, throbbing heart, to its denunciation by Lord A——, and to the few sentences of animadversion, brief and quiet, but full of strange significance, which it drew from Sir R—— P——. And what a picture of the past did their cogent, striking words roll back on her mind !—so much more marked, more

wildly startling, from contrast with the scene around. Each moment, too, the fatal recollection deepened its colouring, brought out more forcibly and distinctly its dark and horrible details, and seemed, while these things still existed, to make even her own redemption incomplete and precarious.

Thus she yielded to a sudden and irresistible panic: her happiness, her advancement—the regal mansion, the gay and splendid company, the magnificent revel, appeared, under the influence of this feeling, like the fabric of a vision, from which she must awaken to despair. Her cheek lost its blush; her rosy lip its colour; and agitated by sad emotions, she feared either to speak or move.

"Miss Rennel, may I ask if you are ill?" said Vavasour, coming forward.

Lord Childars, startled by the inquiry,

glanced hastily at Millicent, and uttered an exclamation of alarm.

"How pale you have turned, Miss Rennel!" he added. "You must indeed be ill."

"No, it is nothing," replied Millicent; "only these dreadful revelations. They have so pained, so unnerved me, I really cannot remain here any longer. You will think me very weak, Mr. Vavasour, but I have been listening to accounts of the female labourers in the mines."

"Oh!" murmured Vavasour, blushing crimson.

There was a pause, and moving on, they made their way to Lady Gresham.

The chaperone, who was an inveterate rake, was shocked at Millicent's wish to go home, it being yet scarcely morning, an hour of departure not recognised by Hoyle. But

Millicent being urgent, the point was speedily conceded.

Lord Childars attended her till the last, striving ineffectually to rally her, while his every look and gesture beamed devotion. Returning up the saloon, he encountered Belwood.

"I should have lost my wager, Lord Childars, had you taken me," said Belwood. "The lady thought you a richer prize than me."

"Sir!" answered the nobleman coldly.

"Nay, I only wish to drop a word of caution about her, and to do that, I must give you an inkling of her history."

"Pray spare yourself the trouble. I never thank people for information, having always a reasonable supply of my own."

"This is something you would never guess."

"Let me try."

"It will be in vain, I am sure. But I am all attention."

"Then, you probably wish to apprise me Miss Rennel was formerly employed in your coal-mine."

"The deuce! Who told you?"

"HERSELF!"

CHAPTER VII.

DAY brought back sunshine to Millicent's heart. It was impossible to look from the balcony on the boundless expanse of water, smooth as a lake of crystal—to feel the fresh pure air, to look up at the wide-spread heavens, and not show a reflection of brightness, just as the playful changes of the sky, now displaying its naked azure, now modestly veiled in snow-white fleeces, were mirrored in the purple sea.

The cloud that oppressed her mind had

... a glance.

Mrs. Grantley did n
had returned early, sat
been so much entertaine
of the ball, and all that
the one painful incide
Nor did she make a
name of Vavasour, tho
ened a moment, and afte
thoughtful.

After breakfast a carri
door, bringing Sir Ch
Fanny, attended by O
horseback, to invite the

road, in the highest spirits, Sir Charles and Mrs. Grantley talking of long-past days, and the younger friends of the past night, Lord Childars galloped by, but having caught sight of Millicent, took care to loiter till he was overtaken. Then, knowing all the party except Mrs. Grantley, he joined their cortége.

Proceeding leisurely, they chatted away, a little teazed by dust, till, coming to a sequestered and picturesque spot, Lord Childars suggested a walk. The proposition was eagerly accepted by Fanny; but as Mrs. Grantley was indisposed, and could not accompany them, Millicent declined to alight.

"You must not remain on my account," said Mrs. Grantley. "I am sure you will enjoy a promenade, and I shall continue my drive in charge of Sir Charles."

"And I promise to defend you against all

comers, be they highwaymen or beggars," cried the Judge.

"I have the utmost confidence in your gallantry, Sir Charles," said Millicent; "but——"

"But is an unlawful word," cried Lord Childars. "I appeal to the Judge against it, and claim an injunction."

"Lord Childars and others versus Milly Rennel," cried Fanny. "I constitute myself counsel in this appeal, and having no written brief, shall be brief in my words. So my Lud——"

Here rose a peal of laughter, in which the learned Judge joined.

"If your Ludship——"

"Stop, you gipsy," said Sir Charles. "I arrest proceedings, and decide in favour of the plaintiffs. The injunction is granted."

"You are fairly beaten, Milly," observed Mrs. Grantley, "and I advise you not to involve yourself in further litigation. Sir Charles and I will return in half an hour, and take you up."

Millicent no longer held out, being, indeed, as far as her own enjoyment was concerned, very favourable to the proposal, but only unwilling to leave Mrs. Grantley.

Oswald Harper devoted himself to Fanny, opening a wicket, which led across a corn-field, and where they were followed by Millicent and Lord Childars.

"You are partial to the country?" said the Peer, observing that Millicent's eyes brightened, as she looked around.

"Very, though you will probably think it is from want of knowing better, as I have never resided anywhere else."

"But you have been to London?"

"I shall shock you, but I must own I have not."

"Well, I am not shocked. I was not aware any one could live always in the country, and be so entirely free from rusticity; but still I ought to have known that you had not run the gauntlet of a London season."

"Because the said rusticity did, after all, peep out! How can you utter such home-truths, Lord Childars?"

"I must deny that I have uttered them, or that I could possibly be guilty of such treason, in word or thought. I must either have very imperfectly expressed myself, or you have entirely misconceived me. Believe me, I intended anything but criticism, being a fervent admirer of rural characteristics."

"Really and deliberately? Well, after this, I shall expect to hear you are a new

Roger de Coverley, living on your estate, like a patriarch, to the edification and conversion of all the Will Honeycombs in the county. You see you are getting further and further into the maze."

"Not at all; for what I profess I really feel, and am even prepared to maintain. But, remember, I have not avowed myself an admirer of rusticity, but of rural characteristics."

"And where do you draw the line of demarcation? I should like to hear your definition of the *characteristics*."

"Well, I do not look for them in the barn or the farm-yard—in the plough-boy or the dairy-maid—these are the vulgarities of country life, only to be contemplated in Bloomfield."

"And surely his artless muse depicts them in most pleasing colours! You must not

attack Bloomfield, Lord Childars. He is one of my greatest favourites."

"That would canonise him with me, even were he not, as he is, one I have always valued myself. The 'Farmer's Boy,' indeed, is a noble poem—beautiful in design, and perfect in treatment. Of course, we cannot place it in conjunction with the 'Seasons,' but my own opinion is, that by securing a stronger hold on the feelings, and our early impressions, it will command, in future ages, a far wider circle of readers. It is to its simple verse I am indebted for my first sense of the picturesque."

"Which, I suppose, includes the aforementioned rural characteristics?"

"Exactly."

"But you have not yet told me what these are, or where they are to be met with."

"They are leaves in the volume of Nature, easily discovered by its student, and prized above the Sybil's. I shall speak only of those I more especially alluded to, when you challenged explanation, and which are personal virtues. In man they wear a sturdy aspect, developing independence, bluffness, and candour. But that which thus often grows into boorish rudeness, converting the rustic into a clown, assumes in woman a delicacy, a refinement, truly feminine. In her it is innocence, frankness, truth—naïve artlessness, and a charming sensibility."

"You are complimentary, but scarcely just. These qualities, I am sure, do not flourish in the country alone, but are no doubt found in equal perfection in cities."

"Flowers may be found in cities, too; but though they have the same bloom, the same

proportions, the same colouring, yet, contrasted with those you see in the country, you will find they want freshness. It is this that ought to have told me you had not mingled in the smoke of London—not been infected by the dense diplomacy of Almack's, though, after all, I believe you might sustain the ordeal, and your freshness not be diminished. Now have I made my views intelligible?"

"That is really not fair," replied Millicent, stopping at a low stile, facing the road, and smiling in the most provoking manner. "You bribe me with a compliment, and then ask my opinion of your arguments. Now I, too, must play the Jesuit, and keep my opinion to myself."

"And I, as a stanch Protestant, protest against such a decision."

"Ha! ha! that will be of no avail. But I do not see Fanny and Mr. Harper. Where can they have gone?"

"Oh! they will appear presently," replied Lord Childars, and a bright flush mantled his cheek, as, looking round, he found they were alone. "Nay, do not turn back." And he gently detained her. "We have abundance of time; and you are quite neglecting the prospect, which certainly should tempt you to loiter."

"It is indeed very pretty."

"I am no poet," resumed Lord Childars, "and have a perfect horror of sentiment; but one of these garden scenes always disposes me to rhapsody. And that sunset is so soft! so delicate! Day retiring, seems to leave behind footprints of light, which fade almost as they appear. Is it not beautiful?"

"Very; and yet, I think, it wears a touch of sadness. I see a sort of shade—a look of solemnity, even in its most gorgeous tints. Can you not imagine the sun lingers on the horizon, as though he were an unwilling exile, driven from scenes endeared to him? The liquid radiance streaming from his orb might be tears, glowing with the memories of fifty centuries—for so long, sages tell us, his daily exits have been achieved; and I can fancy that glorious cloud above us, half flame and half gold, to be his outstretched arm, bequeathing the earth his blessing."

"Your sketch enchants me. And perhaps it is an impression of this kind that makes the hour so favoured by lovers. Can you imagine it to have such an effect?"

"That is a riddle, and one I could never guess. If we may credit your oracles, the

poets, lovers are so inconsistent, it is impossible to assign any reason for their fancies."

"To understand them, then, one must be under the same influence, feel the same burning passion—in fact, must love?"

"I suppose, we may conclude so."

"I love—devotedly, distractedly," murmured Lord Childars, though in a tone too low to be heard.

There was a pause, and Millicent moved, as if to turn back.

"One moment, Miss Rennel!" said Lord Childars, hurriedly. "May I, while almost a stranger, presume to—But," he added, with a gesture of vexation, "we are interrupted!"

His eye fell on Vavasour, who was close upon them, having, while they were looking in the other direction, crossed the field unper-

ceived, and without discovering their proximity. He now gave a slight start, glancing rapidly from Lord Childars, who endeavoured to cover his irrepressible embarrassment with hauteur, to Millicent. One look at her beaming eye changed his whole demeanour.

"Every one seems to be rusticating this afternoon," he said, after the usual salutation. "I don't know how the mania seized me, but I was obliged to yield to it, and so, seeing an open gate yonder, I sauntered here."

"Did you observe a carriage on the road as you came by?" asked Millicent.

"No."

"Then they have not returned yet, and we shall have time to walk back leisurely, Lord Childars."

"I beg your pardon?" said the Peer, aroused from a reverie.

Millicent repeated her observation.

"Oh, yes," returned Lord Childars. "And yet," he added, producing his watch, "we are mistaken. Can you conceive that we have been away an hour?"

"Impossible!"

"So I should have thought myself, only that my watch is a proverb. I could have sworn, indeed, that it was only a few minutes."

"A lover's oath!" said Vavasour, with a slight curl of his lip, "or it would be perjury." —Avoiding the Peer's eye, he added quickly, "But in the worst case, Miss Rennel, I can answer for your safe transit to Brighton, if you will do me the honour to accept a seat in my cabriolet?"

"Oh! thank you: mamma, I know, will not go without me. And now I see Mr. Harper's groom there, no doubt coming to say she is waiting."

Next moment she glanced in the other di-

and whose figures flashed u
like a hideous dream. Wa
or did she recognise in th
gaunt man, clad in rags, and
bold-looking woman, Black
She feared it was so; and w
ignominy, to be claimed by
an acquaintance—a compan
and in the presence of Vav
Childars! The two gentler
ing her discomposure, endea
her again in conversation, bu
monosyllable replies, scarcel
deed, what she said, absorbe

behind her: she heard their voices—voices that still, after the lapse of years, sounded but too familiar, making her heart thrill with pain. She would have turned her head as they passed, but at this moment, Lord Childars addressed her so directly, that it was impossible, and while he was speaking, Black Jem, attracted by their distingué appearance, wheeled round to survey them.

"Whoy, Milly Rennel! be it thou, wench?" he cried, transfixed with astonishment. "Sink me, but I be glad to see 'ee! How be 'ee, lass?"—And he held out his hand.

"Oh! protect me, Lord Childars," said Millicent, clinging to the nobleman's arm. "Send him away, Mr. Vavasour, I entreat."

"Whoy, who be yo, then, that poor folk, bain't to come nigh hand 'ee?" demanded Jem's companion, the redoubtable Doll, in a menacing tone. "Foine feathers make foine

birds; but ootherwise, I suppose, Mill Rennel bain't no better nor us."

Millicent shuddered.

"Do not be alarmed," said Lord Childars. "They shall not molest you."

"Who, in the name of Heaven, are they?" exclaimed Vavasour, who had turned white as ashes.

"No matter," replied Lord Childars. "We will leave them here. Come, Miss Rennel. We can go this way, as I see the carriage is coming up the road."

Turning his arm round the speechless girl, he raised her over the stile; and Vavasour, to cover their retreat, planted himself before it.

"She ain't goin' off that way, don't 'ee think," said Black Jem.

"You pull 'un away from the stile, Jem," cried Doll, "and I'll settle her hash for 'un. Dang her! I'll tear her flash tog into ribbunds."

"Come along, then," returned Jem. "Now, baboon," he said to Caliban, who had just stepped in front of him: "what do thou want?"

"Scarce, if you please," replied Caliban—"scarce is the word. Your name is Walker, I believe."—And he waved his hand.

"I'm blowed!" exclaimed Jem. "But I see what yo' wants — apples for sarce. Where'll yo' have it?"

He levelled his fist at the monster, who, however, adroitly slipped aside, and then, springing up, planted a blow in the giant's eye.

"That's about the corner, I think. Pretty well, I thank 'ee."

A simultaneous rush from Jem and Doll, vociferous with execrations, threatened him with annihilation; but active as an imp, he whirled round them, and escaped through a gap in the hedge.

"I'll thrash 'un, if I'se hung for't," cried Jem, making for the stile.

"If yo' doan't, yo' ought to be paid out your own self," exclaimed Doll. "Now, muster, yo' stand off, will 'ee?"

"Hilloa!" said a passer-by, pulling her back, and at the same time laying his hand on Black Jem, "where are you two goin' to? What's the row?"

"Spanish Bill!" cried the worthy pair, together.

"Yes," was the answer. "And you come away, both on you. What are you gettin' up a skrimmage for?"

"I don't want no piece o' work," replied Jem, "but I'll sarve that chap out."

"Yeez, yo' would, if he'd stand it," said Doll, sneeringly. "Yo've let 'em get off now, yo' coward."

"Thou'd better give us none o' your clack," answered Jem, with a scowl.

"How you both keeps on botherin'!" observed their new companion. "Enough's as good as a feast; so come along, and don't say no more. You try and be sociable, Doll, will you?"

The irate couple reluctantly yielded to his objurgation, though not without certain oblique mutterings, especially from Doll, whose tongue, if not loud, possessed an unfathomable depth. Thus they walked away; and Vavasour sprang into his cab, sent on to him by Lord Childars; and drove off, though not in the direction taken by Millicent.

His face was still very pale, but fire flashed from his eye, and offended pride stamped every lineament. The incident had revived, with tenfold force, all those feelings of bitterness and exasperation, which he had experienced on first discovering Millicent's origin. He felt degraded, too, by the spell she had thrown over him—by the attraction

which drew him towards her, withstanding and overthrowing his hereditary convictions, his judgment, his reason.

Absorbed in these reflections, he extended his drive to an unusual distance, so as not to reach Brighton till dusk. Still the conflict of passion and feeling oppressed and harassed him, keeping his mind in a fever of agitation, his heart in tumult. His sumptuous dinner was scarcely tasted; the choice wine, brilliant as fabled nectar, stood untasted before him, and he sat as in a trance, gloomy, absent, motionless.

Did he love her? Did his eye dwell, with tender and enraptured fondness, on her beauty, her sweet disposition, the sorcery of her looks? Did he still linger on the pleased glance she had met him with, only a few hours previously; and the mere remembrance of which, even now, when all his most inveterate impressions were arrayed and pitted

against her, thrilled his veins with fire? Was he—could he be so infatuated?

Yes! He felt that her presence made him a new being—gave him a buoyancy and animation germane to his natural character; and that absent from her, he was sad, moody, and dejected. The conviction thus forced into view, brought a burning blush to his cheek, but its testimony was not to be impeached. The truth was but too apparent—too real! He had made her the hope and light of life.

But he would tear up the unworthy passion, even though, in doing so, he rent his own heart. The damned spot should out! He would pluck her from his thoughts—from his memory; or if that were impossible, and the great effort he contemplated should fail, he would at least shun the fascinating lure of her society: he would never meet her again!

At last, he aroused himself, and looked round more collectedly. The wax tapers had

sensibly dwindled; the timepiece pointed at midnight; and a profound stillness pervaded the house; though frequent bursts of wind, which beat furiously against the windows, kept up an incessant din without. The roar of the blast was in unison with his wild and troubled feelings; and throwing open the window, he stepped into the garden.

Nature, like himself, had completely lost her serene expression, and, by one of those sudden changes common at the sea-side, was now hung with deepest darkness. Not a single star could be discerned, though a lurid glimmer, seen for an instant and then disappearing, occasionally broke from the moon, showing masses of dark and impending cloud, flying along like phantoms. And the gale, now howling and whistling, now rolling in thunder-claps, swept fiercely by, rocking huge trees to the roots, and whirling aloft eddies of leaves, as vehement and furious as itself.

This was soothing to Vavasour. His

galled spirit looked with equal satisfaction on the grand, vast gloom above, and the fantastic disorder around. The sharp, cutting air, which would have blinded some, only cooled the hectic glow of his brow; its mighty voice hushed his complaining thoughts. And thus he stood and listened.

Suddenly he gave a start, imagining he heard a cry for help. He bent his ear attentively, and now no longer felt doubtful. It was a woman's scream !

CHAPTE

SPANISH BILL, whc
opportunely between]
ban, was a slight-built
hook nose, and rheum
was attired in a faded v
duroys, and high-lows.
moustachios hanging o
mouth, as well as a cer
step, announced that he

note than is necessary to mention, in the British Auxiliary Legion of Spain.

Night found Bill seated by himself in one of the cheap lodging-houses of Brighton, on the wrong side of St. Peter's Church. The small, low-roofed room was squalid and miserable in the extreme, and contained no other furniture than a dilapidated shake-down, two crazy chairs, a box, and a deal table. This last was garnished with a pewter-pot, about half full of gin, a tobacco-box and dhudeen, and an empty bottle, the long neck of which, promoted to the office of candle-stick, served to sustain a lighted dip. Spanish was amusing himself with a game of "beg-o'-my-neighbour," played in conjunction with dummy, though every now and then he glanced with impatience at the door. At last, it opened, and Black Jem entered.

"I couldn't get aff afore," he said. "But she be all roight now, snorin'."

"That's the ticket," answered Spanish. "The gals is all very well, but business is business. Here you are!"—And he handed the pewter.

"This is coomed of a good sort," said Jem, smacking his lips.

Spanish gave his standard sentiment— "Posterity!"

"Now sit down, and get your steam up," he added, presenting Jem the tobacco-box; "and I'll tell you what I've been brewin' on. And mind, it's a job as'll set us goin' for half a year."

"Yo' said the same tale o' the thimble-rig, at the oss-races," answered Jem, rather sullenly; "but nowght coomed to I out on't, though, rot it! moindin' what a soight of monney I zeed, there were summat handsome scraped up by oother volk."

"You never made such a mistake in your life, if you thinks so. I was out o' pocket

by it—lost my awl, as the cobler says. No, there was nothin' made o' the thimble-rig, but this is a different consarn. This is a crackin' job."

"I hope it'll be summat better nor t'oother, ony ways; and I'se awand yo' I'll have my share, if I has to foight for't."

"There won't be no need o' that, I assure you: so pray put down your collar. Fortinately my honour is above suspicion, or I'd consider your obserwations raythar personal. But there's no use goin' on with this-'eer: so we'll just begin business. Fust, it has somethin' to do with that wench o' yourn, as you've been patterin' about so—Milly Rennel, as you calls her."

"No?"

"One o' the gals as I pays attention to," pursued Spanish, twirling his hand through his hair, "is servant to the lady as has 'dopted her; and so, as one o' the connexion, I've felt raythar interessted in the family,

shift; but for all that,

o' plate."

"I smokes," cried Je

takable cloud.

"What's more to th

nish, dogmatically, "I

o' duals—the reg'lar t

no mistake."

"Well, I'm blessed

"who'd ever ha' thart

comin' to sitch a fortin

"I think the fortin

it'll be our own fault i

thing is, have you go

for it?"

reether slow; but I suppose, if we gets catched, it'll be all up—" And he gave a significant chuck under his chin.

"Not a bit of it. The laws of England is werry bad, but not so down on you as that. No! suppose we *are* caught, it is only the herrin' pond—a emigration to Botany Bay, whether you likes it or no. But that's nothin' to us, as we've only women to deal with, and there's no fear of wiolence."

"But that ain't all, for if they wakes, there'll be sitch a hollarin', it ull be a good soight wuss."

"Not such a night as this-'eer, when a strong nor-wester's blowin', as Shakspeare says. And besides, it wouldn't so much matter no-how, as the house is a willa."

"A willa!—danged if I know what 'ee means!"

"Don't you? Well! if I didn't know you was a yokel, I'd set you down for a Irisher. You recollects Byron's old song of 'All round my hat I wears a green willa?' Well, this

zure-ly! There'd be

"Gardeners in thei

the job, and is like

to be drunk on the

flunkey, but he's to l

to-night, and that's wi

scent. And now you

say whether you'll jo

won't, I'll go by mysel

"In course, I'll jine.

bairn't one us'll shoy a

"That you never wa

slapping him approvin

"and so it's a reg'lar se

co. And now while

CHAPTER IX.

A TAPER, burning before a stately toilet-glass, worthy to reflect the dazzling graces of Cytherea, lit up a commodious bed-chamber, furnished in the most costly and luxurious manner. At the bedside was a kneeling figure: it was Millicent.

The white drapery that clothed her form was not purer than her thoughts—than her true loving heart, as she thus appeared in worship before her Maker. With her pious spirit absorbed in adoration, and displaying all its most secret impressions, she could kneel

without shrinking in the daily confessional, although her confessor was God.

At times, there is something inexpressibly composing in the solitude of the pillow. When events are in suspense, indeed, and so keep hope and fear in constant alternation, it is the burning sand and restless tossing of the desert; but after actual experience of disaster, and tasting, it may be, the bitter dregs of mortification or sorrow, what consolation like that silent, voiceless fellowship? And the sordid littleness of the world—its pursuits, strifes, pomps, and ambitions, is never so striking, brought into glaring prominence by the repose of night. The darkness insensibly promotes the contemplation of higher and more lasting objects, seeming to realise the futurity it images, and change its shadows into light. The stillness—the universal rest, assuages and heals each wounded sensibility, enlarges the powers of endurance, softens the steeled feelings, and unlocks the deep and

fruitful springs of kindness and sympathy —as if the benign Angel who watches the couch of Faith, dropped a hallowing influence from his wings.

Humiliated as Millicent had been, in a manner so totally unexpected, and at a moment when she might well be animated by a feeling of innocent pride, her disciplined mind had yet recovered its tone, its serenity, looking back on the painful and mortifying incident with pensive resignation. She did not feel disgraced, or degraded by it; but was reminded, as by an apparition from the tomb — a voice speaking from the dreary and fearful past, how she had been rescued from degradation — from a servitude and thraldom worse than Egyptian. And in this calm and dispassionate hour, when she stood revealed to her own self, scrutinising and purifying every kindling thought, the reflection dispelled her regrets, and, in their

place, filled her heart with gratitude, thankfulness, and devotion.

Her sleep, in strange contrast with quietude so perfect, was troubled and broken, reviving the panic of the day, and all her poignant emotions. It might be mere accident, but, considering what followed, it seemed the device of a guardian Intelligence, seeking, by the renewal of alarm, to apprise her of the approach of danger. Suddenly she gave a wild start, and awoke.

Window and shutter shook before the blast, now in the height of its fury, and rushing round the isolated house like a whirlwind. Millicent listened, gradually repressing her terrors, and trying to reassure herself, when she was startled by a scream.

Could it be a trick of her heated imagination? She listened again, but, with the most rapt attention, could hear only the storm without. Still she was not satisfied.

It was possible that Mrs. Grantley, who had gone to bed much fatigued, might have been taken ill, and be calling for help; and she determined, before lying down again, to visit her room, and see that all was secure.

Throwing on a morning-dress, and drawing a shawl round her shoulders, she hurried to the door. It opened on a corridor, running over the staircase, between two flights of stairs, one of which led to the hall, and the other to floors above. Mrs. Grantley's room was at the opposite end of the corridor, forming a companion chamber to her own.

It was so dark Millicent could not distinguish the door, but it was evidently not shut close, as she heard voices within. For an instant, indeed, a flash of light appeared, but then vanished, and, as she involuntarily drew aside, a man came forth. There was another flash, emitted by a lantern which he glanced around, but being screened by a projection, Millicent was not revealed.

With noiseless step the man came on, making directly for her room. She stood as still as a statue, not venturing to breathe, yet retaining her self-possession, decision, and courage. Her design, formed on the spur of the moment, was to wait till he had passed, and then fly to the assistance of Mrs. Grantley.

The man had now reached her chamber-door, and stood in front of her—so close, indeed, that she almost touched him. Still her attention was not wholly diverted from the other room, and an occasional slight noise, accompanied by a jingling of keys, as of some one rummaging, intimated too clearly that Mrs. Grantley had not been left alone. Yet the voice that first alarmed her was now silent. Could it be that, attempting to resist the robbers, her kind benefactress had been murdered? Her heart quailed at the thought!

The man had stooped down, placing his lantern on the mat, while he inserted a

skeleton-key in the door. He found, however, that it was not locked, and, instantly throwing it open, was scrambling up, when his foot slipped, and he fell back on Millicent. She darted round him, hoping to escape up the stairs, but he was quick as herself, and flinging himself forward, cut off retreat.

"Now I've got 'ee," he said, with an oath, as he grasped her shoulders. "And thou'd best gie us no clack, or, strike me dead! I'll send 'ee floyin' over the railin'."

"Oh! let me go!" exclaimed Millicent. "For the love of Heaven—if you have any pity, let me go!"

"Whoy, be it thou?" cried the burglar. "Be it old Mill coomed back agen? Hoity-toity! Yo'll know me now, won't 'ee, wench?—yo'll know your old chum, Black Jem?"

"Yes, I know you: I have never denied knowing you. I could not speak to you to-

Leave the house r-
thunderin' good 'un !
take every rag thou'st g
yo'."

"Loose me !" cried
ing to throw off his gra

"Yo' wants settlin',
Jem. "There, then !"

He pushed her vi
banister, which, curving
stairs, destroyed her ba
forced her over. But J
shoulders, and she clun
stout oaken balustrade, l

"What d'ye say now
a fiendish laugh. "I'll

"Hold your 'farnal jaw, then, and tell us where the swag is. I won't leave 'ee no great lot to brag on."

"I will give you everything I possess," replied Millicent, rallying, "if you will assist me up, and promise to commit no further violence. I will try, too, to get you forgiven—at least to prevent your being prosecuted. But if you do me any injury, I tell you plainly I will denounce you, and never rest till I see you punished."

"But suppose I stops yer gag?—suppose I shoves 'ee down, and breaks yer gallus neck? Dang 'ee, it'll spile yer beauty, onyways."

"I am not afraid of you. You know I did not fear you in the pit, when you threatened to murder me; neither do I fear you now. You can kill me, but remember, you will have to answer for my life with your own."

"I'll jist take my chance o' that," cried Jem, furiously; "so leave go o' the rail.

Curse 'ee, leave go; or I'll chop off yer
foine-lady fingers for 'ee."

Suiting the action to the word, he snatched forth his knife; but Millicent, having succeeded in tying her shawl to the balustrade, withdrew her hands, and, lowering herself, dropped unhurt on the stairs below. Amazed that she made no outcry, Jem was running round to ascertain whether she had, as he had predicted, broken her neck, when he saw her spring up the stairs, and, before he could interpose, she reached Mrs. Grantley's room. Panting and breathless, she flung-to the door, and as quickly locked it.

"Dear, dear mamma! they have not hurt you?" she cried, rushing to the bedside.

"Hilloa! what's this-'eer?" exclaimed Spanish, turning from some drawers he was ransacking, as Black Jem burst through the door.

Mrs. Grantley, who was sitting up in bed, half-dressed, drew Millicent towards her.

"Stay with me, dear child," she said.

"Let them take everything, so that they do not hurt us."

"I'll have her—she's moine!" cried Black Jem. "I don't care for yer swag, but the wench I wull have."

"Come, come, I won't stand no wiolence," interposed Spanish; "I never does. Wiolence, when you're put on trial, settles your hash at once; so go along, Josey, and leave the gal alone."

"Don't run atween a dog and his meat," returned Jem, menacingly; "I'se coomed here 'specially for she, and I bairn't goin' to be bounced out an her. Curse 'ee, get out o' my road."

He shoved him aside, and was making a rush at Millicent, when Vavasour darted in, and before he was perceived—for the bull's-eye of the thieves' lantern scarcely broke the darkness—struck him to the floor with a crowbar.

"Ha! a beak!" exclaimed Spanish, pre-

senting a pistol. "Hang you, take that, then!"

Vavasour just avoided the shot, which whizzed close to his ear, while Spanish, without waiting to see its effect, made off, leaving his half-collected booty behind.

"Oh! Mr. Vavasour! are you hurt?" cried Millicent, hastening up to him.

"That voice!" exclaimed Vavasour, in agitated accents. "Am I addressing Miss Rennel?"

"Yes; and I must salute you as our deliverer. What do we not owe you?"

"Nothing; for I really was not aware whom I came to assist. But here are lights: so I will just see this miscreant secured."—And as two female servants, who had been alarmed by the report of the pistol, came in trembling with a candle, he seized Jem by the heels, and dragged him forth. To secure the burglar, however, was not so easy a matter; for as Vavasour reached the landing,

Jem suddenly recovered, and sprang to his feet, clearing the stairs at a bound. Vavasour darted after him, calling loudly for the police; but Jem, favoured by the darkness, contrived to effect his escape.

In a few minutes, the whole household were up and dressed. Mrs. Grantley and Millicent descended to the breakfast-room, where Vavasour, now despairing of Jem's recapture, joined them.

"My nephew, I believe?" said Mrs. Grantley, advancing to meet him.

"I believe I may claim that relationship, madam," replied Vavasour, rather coldly, though accepting her proffered hand.

"Yes," resumed Mrs. Grantley; "I could recognise you as a Vavasour. You have the freezing tones, the hauteur, and the resentful look of your father—of our race, indeed. But you are welcome, nephew. I am indebted to you for your timely assistance."

"Not at all," returned Vavasour, in a

softened manner. "We Vavasours, with all our bad qualities, have, you know, ever thought the obligation on our side, when permitted the privilege of serving fair ladies. I am so glad I happened to come just as I did. You will think me but a poor knight, though, when I tell you I have let the miscreant I had charge of slip through my fingers."

"He has escaped, then?" said Millicent, with a sigh of relief—but too glad to be rid of Black Jem's presence.

"Unfortunately he has; but you must still not think hardly of me. I believe it was you, Miss Rennel, who were the damsel in distress?"

"We were equally endangered," said Mrs. Grantley, before Millicent could speak, "but it was I who gave the alarm. As soon as my room-door was forced, I flew to the window, and cried for help."

"And your presence of mind has saved us

both," observed Millicent, "for, no doubt, it was this brought Mr. Vavasour to our aid."

"Yes, I heard a scream, and scaled the wall of your garden, and finding the back-door open, used the freedom of entering *sans cérémonie*. Luckily I kicked over a crow-bar on the stairs, and was thus enabled to begin hostilities."

"And, now it is all over, here is my little Milly, who was so brave in the midst of danger, trembling like a leaf," said Mrs. Grantley. "Yet I must tell you, Mr. Vavasour, that, before, all her thought and care were for me."

"Dear mamma!" said Millicent, pressing her hand. "But I must caution Mr. Vavasour against you, as one of the dearest, kindest friends in the world."

"I hope, in time, to know as much by personal experience," said Vavasour, yielding to the fascination of Millicent's presence.

"We can be friends, though we should

Vavasour. I hope we sl
of seeing you the firs
engaged."

Vavasour accepted
eagerness, lingering a
would permit, and, at
leave. He was not h
Millicent's hand, or he
that it trembled.

CHAPTER X.

Mrs. Grantley did not feel at the time any ill effects from the alarm and excitement she had sustained; but next day their influence on her sensitive frame was but too apparent, and she was unable to leave her room. The assiduous care, however, of Millicent, who never left her, and the skill of her physician, soon produced a favourable impression, and before the week expired, she appeared to have recovered at least her previous delicate health. But the eye of affection is searching, and her pale attenuated cheeks, languid spirits, and daily failing

Childars called repeate
engrossed by her attend
ley, would see no one.
mitted was Fanny Rayı

It is impeaching the
absence, springing out o
not unfavourable to th
Millicent had begun to
By the bedside of her b
he was so nearly relate
to form a connecting lir
watching for long, long
night, silent and alone, he
reverted to one who had
snatch her from outrage

though unconsciously, regarded him with increasing interest. His possible affinity to Mrs. Grantley, suggested so readily by his name, and the striking resemblance of features, accounted for this prepossession; and, under such an influence, she could not overlook the manly beauty of his person, the winning suavity of his voice, the efforts he made to please and amuse her. She had felt flattered, too, by his manifest preference, which had even seemed to thaw and animate himself, so that, in her presence, his inherent haughtiness had succumbed, softened, and almost disappeared. She could form no conception how deeply that quality was implanted in his heart—how wild and frequent were its conflicts with his spirit—how completely it had tainted, corrupted, and perverted his nature.

After an interval of about a fortnight, she was sitting one morning in the music-room,

at the end of a suite of apartments opening from the drawing-room, and was playing a little air on the harp, when she heard a step behind, and looking round, discovered Vavasour.

"I ask a thousand pardons for intruding," he said, not without sharing her embarrassment, "but I was shown into the further room, and the doors being open, I could not resist the attraction of your voice. Indeed, music has such power over me, I believe Saul himself was not more influenced by it."

"But you have no evil spirit, like his, that it can chase away," said Millicent, with a soft smile.

"I hope, not; and yet I must own to a fi of gloom when I came here, and which your voice and lyre have dispelled. If it is not encroaching, I would venture to solicit an encore."

"I shall be very happy, but this little trifle,

though a favourite of mine, will probably, on a repetition, not be so agreeable to you. Shall I sing something else?"

"Oh, no! that before anything, if you will so oblige me."

Millicent resumed her seat, and after a few preliminary but thrilling touches, accompanied the music with this

Song.

Oh! love is gentle, tender, gay,
Though changeful as an April day:
Oh! love is true, devoted, pure,
And constant as the day is sure.

In summer's heat or winter's frost,
Its bloom, its perfume, is not lost:
In weal or woe 't is still the same,
A bright, serene, undying flame.

Its stem will bend before a sigh,
And yet it will the blast defy:
The dew upon it is a tear,
And yet it knows not doubt or fear.

All things beside must fail, but love
Is steadfast as the sky above:
In age as youth, still, still as fond,
It gives a pledge of life beyond.

It was clear, when the performance ceased,

that Vavasour, however disposed to be complimentary, had by no means exaggerated his constitutional sensitiveness to music. His ear drank the dulcet sounds, as if they were the incantation of an enchantress, while

> —— her voice in low sweet accents fell,
> Melting the soul with softest harmony.

The eagle glance left his eye, now subdued and pensive; his patrician lip was no longer curled; and an air of impassioned melancholy invested his features.

"And this it is to love!" he observed, musingly. "May we take the description as a faithful one?"

"You, perhaps, think it the love of romance, more than of real life?" replied Millicent, her colour deepening, though she knew not why.

"Then, you take me for a Turk or an infidel, who cannot receive such an ethereal creed?—who can believe only what is sordid and tangible? I deny the imputation, and announce myself one of those dogged few

who still cling to the old-fashioned notions of faith, and truth, and feeling."

"I did not suppose anything else," said Millicent, with forced gaiety. "Your defence, therefore, is quite gratuitous."

"Had I known you gave me credit for so much, I should certainly have dispensed with a trumpeter. But you know we all have a claim to special indulgence in these matters. 'The wisest of us,' Crabbe says, are perfect fools in love.'"

"But Crabbe has gone quite out of fashion."

"Oh! does it depend upon fashion? Then, how can I hope, with my retired habits, to know anything about it? Pray be my preceptress."

"I could not undertake such a responsibility, being wholly without experience. My friend Miss Raymond, now, if you have an opportunity of broaching the subject to her, can really give you some valuable infor-

mation."—And again her face was brightened with that soft smile, so demure, and so provoking.

"It would be of no value to me," said Vavasour, quickly. "It is *your* views I ask; *your* sentiments I am curious about. Do, Miss Rennel, tell me, seriously—as a favour, if you will, what is *your* opinion of love."

"I should only lead you wrong if I were to say."

"I am persuaded that nothing coming from your heart, as such an opinion must, could by any chance be wrong. So pray tell me what you think."

"What if I have never thought about it?"

"Can that be? I imagined love was the one universal theme of ladies' day-dreams—the gist of all their speculations. I could fancy it to be scarcely ever out of their minds."

"Then, I think you are mistaken. Woman is not a creature of thought, but of impulse, and, still more, of affection. Love, indeed, is her attribute—we may say, her ruling genius; but it does not spring from her imagination. You must look for it in her heart, in her sympathies, animating, guiding, and controlling her. She seldom thinks of it till she feels it."

"I should like extremely to know what you think of it," said Vavasour, coaxingly.

"Ha! ha! you may be assured I do not agree with Sir Anthony, in the 'Rivals,' that it is better to begin with a little aversion. But there is mamma calling, you must come and speak to her."

Vavasour, a little disappointed, followed to the further room, where they found Mrs. Grantley entertaining Lord Childars and Oswald. Vavasour darted a glance of triumph at Lord Childars, at the same time addressing his aunt, who received him in the most

affectionate manner. He did not, however, join the conversation, but, after exchanging a few words with Mrs. Grantley, devoted himself exclusively to Millicent.

"You are fond of flowers?" he said, observing a well-stored stand at the window.

"Oh, yes, passionately," replied Millicent; "and yet not more so than mamma, who taught me all I know about them. Her garden at Winstone is a perfect little Eden."

"I can well believe it, and hope one day to tender my homage on the spot. But can you have anything there finer than this?—my favourite flower, too, the white camelia!"

"Your favourite, is it? Then you must allow me to present you one."

"Oh! thank you! You will indeed confer a favour on me; and I shall value your gift when its beauty has faded, as much as now."

He spoke low, but in a tone so deep and earnest, and with a look so impassioned, that

the words brought a bright flush to Millicent's cheek. She cut several of the choicest buds, scarcely conscious of what she was doing, and not aware, in her agitation, that one dropped from her hand, and fell on the carpet. It was instantly seen by Lord Childars.

"My life for that flower," he cried, hastening to pick it up.

"I believe, my lord, it belongs to me," said Vavasour, stiffly.

Lord Childars, though he heard, did not notice the remark. "You will not take it from me, I am sure, Miss Rennel?" he said, in a manner half playful, half entreating. "When Fortune is so kind, you cannot be cruel."

"Such a propitiatory speech really deserves something better," smiled Millicent; "and, perhaps, Mr. Vavasour will spare it to you, as I have given two to him."

"Oh, you must be the donor. I must receive it from you, or it will lose its charm."

"If that will give it a charm, I must present it to you," replied Millicent.

And, with a gay smile, she glanced up at Vavasour; but he turned abruptly away, without making a remark. Lord Childers followed her eye anxiously, as, with a look mingling regret and tenderness, she gazed after him; and he observed her emotion with evident chagrin.

Soon afterwards, Vavasour went away, having for the first time left Millicent impressed with the irritable jealousy of his nature and its inordinate self-love. She now joined little in the conversation, speaking only in monosyllables; and after a vain attempt to recal her vivacity, Lord Childers, desiring to hide his own discomposure, took leave.

Flinging himself in the saddle, he rode furiously along in the direction of Kemp Town, unconscious that Vavasour, who had been loitering close by, was galloping after

him. As he turned his horse at the cliffs, they confronted each other.

"I will thank you for a moment's attention, my lord, if you please," said Vavasour, haughtily. "I must tell you that I think you have thrust yourself into my concerns this morning in a very unwarrantable manner."

"Are you speaking to me, sir?" returned Lord Childars, in a freezing tone, his chafed temper no way propitiated by this salutation.

"I believe I am addressing Lord Childars, and your lordship will please to remember that my name is Vavasour. To prevent further misunderstanding, I think it right to come to an explanation with you—to say I shall regard a repetition of such interference as you have thought fit to practise to-day as a personal affront."

"Upon my word, you are exceedingly fierce, sir, but let me assure you, your wrath is all wasted on me. To interfere with you,

or any one like you, is the last thing I should dream of."

"Should you have such a dream, my lord, I shall be under the necessity of awaking you," replied Vavasour, significantly.

"You are too insolent, sir. Pray believe I shall always be guided in my conduct by my own judgment, even should I offend all the Bobadils in the country."

"Am I to understand you apply the term Bobadil to me?"

"You may understand what you like, only have the goodness to move out of my way, or I must ride over you."

"You may spare yourself the trouble, as I take the word for the deed. Our dispute must be settled, I see, in another place."

And turning his horse, they rode off in different directions.

CHAPTER XI.

Lord Childars had gone but a short distance, when his better nature, rallying from the infirmity of the moment, made him regret the hasty expressions he had suffered to escape. In the bitterness of disappointment at the impression Vavasour had made on Millicent, for whom he had contracted a devoted and now hopeless attachment, which would leave his future life a blank—exasperated at his rival's triumph, and his own ill-fortune—dejected, miserable, reckless, Vavasour's imperious behaviour had goaded him into a vehemence and rudeness very foreign

to his nature. This, though wayward at times, was composed of the highest qualities, habituated to a strict and watchful self-discipline, ever aiming at excellence; and presented, with some trifling imperfections, a fine specimen of that new school of English nobility, which boasts a Lincoln, a Chandos, and a Carlisle.

The barbarous practice of settling a dispute with a pistol, in spite of the sanction of notable and impressive examples, had always excited his abhorrence; and he had accustomed himself to look with contempt on the mind that, from a craven fear of derision, could consent to sacrifice its innate convictions of right, though prompted alike by reason and religion, to the arbitrary dictum of the world. And now, when the trial came—when his own virtue and principle were to be tested, he failed himself, preferring to violate the holy ordinances of God, rather than retract a few impetuous, unguarded

words. Hard it is, indeed, under any circumstances, to acknowledge oneself in error, but how much more difficult is the task when such an admission will certainly be attributed to base and ignominious motives! This is to be truly chivalrous—to attain that genuine and unspotted heroism pronounced by the wisest of Teachers to be at once the Law and the Prophets.

Angry and dissatisfied with himself, Lord Childars made no effort to shake off his gloom, and it became more and more oppressive, assuming at last all the force of an evil presentiment. Still he did not neglect the necessary preparations, and in momentary expectation of a message from Vavasour, he sent for a friend, an officer in the Guards, who was staying at the same hotel, to act in his behalf.

The Honourable Captain Villiers—for a Lieutenant in the petted Guards has the rank of Captain—was a cadet of a house long

ennobled, and which had attained the highest honours in the State. Young, gay, thoughtless, and dissipated, he had himself achieved more blushing trophies, in the shape of broken bell-pulls and knockers, wrenched from many a West-End door, than any officer in the regiment, and was decidedly one of the fastest men it could boast of. He answered Lord Childars's summons without a moment's delay.

"'Pon life, it's an awkward affair," he said, after hearing his explanation. "I suppose you won't have it arranged in any way?"

"Oh! of course not," replied Lord Childars.

"Then, we've only to settle the time and rendezvous, unless your man fights off. Perhaps, he may turn out to be a Bob—I forget his name, but you know who I mean—the fellow in the play."

"Bob Acres?"

"Precisely."

"Oh, no! he is more like Sir Lucius—a regular fire-eater."

"What do you intend to do, then?"

"Do! How do you mean?"

"Why, do you kill or wing? because, in the event of extremities, we must prepare for levanting."

"On these occasions, my dear Villiers, we should always be prepared for everything; but you speak as if the result rested entirely with me. Undeceive yourself on this point, pray."

"Oh, in that case, you must take care of yourself. Self-preservation is the first law of—I forget the exact word, but you know what I mean. Is your hand pretty steady?"

"You shall see," said Lord Childars, with a melancholy smile.

He opened a small case, and drew forth a pistol: then threw up the window, and having ascertained that no person was near, placed a lighted taper in front of it.

"Now," he said, stationing himself at the other side of the room, and levelling his pistol.

"By Jove, you've snuffed it!" exclaimed the Guardsman, clapping hands. "I wouldn't give sixpence for your man's chance. I vote you wing him. I assure you, going out's thought nothing of now, unless there's blood drawn. We sha'n't be able to get it into the *Morning*—confound it! I have the name at my tongue's end, and can't recollect it. But you know what I mean—the newspaper, you know?"

"Ah, you wish to treat the fashionable world with a regular bulletin in the *Post.* I would rather avoid that, if we possibly can."

"Avoid it! 'Pon life, Childars, you're a strange fellow—a perfect—you know what I mean. But I will leave you now to write your letters, and that sort of thing. If your man sends a fellow, you can walk him up to me, you know; and when it's all settled, I'll come down and tell you."

Before he could withdraw, however, the door was thrown open, and a servant announced Major Calvert.

The Major was an old Peninsular blade, belonging to a distinguished corps of the line, and with a face which, when he was in full dress, vied in richness of colour with his regimental coat. Now, however, he was, of course, in mufti.

"I have come to you, Lord Childars, on the part of my friend, Mr. Vavasour," he said, accepting the invitation to be seated. "I presume you are acquainted with the nature of my mission?"

"Oh, certainly. My friend here, Captain Villiers, of the Guards, will act for me."

The two officers exchanged bows, each, as he took the other's measure, feeling a profound contempt for their distinct branches of the service.

"I will now bid you good evening, Major

Calvert," pursued Lord Childars. "I leave every arrangement entirely to you and Villiers." And he retired.

"Am I to conclude it is impossible to settle this business in an amicable manner, Captain Villiers?" asked the Major, as soon as they were alone.

"Why, I suppose so—that is, if your man wants us to retract, and apologise, and that sort of thing."

"But possibly we may be able to pave the way—to smooth things down a little," said the Major, with a gentle motion of his hand; "and so make it comparatively easy. I remember once, just before the battle of Barossa—"

"Ah! I've heard all about Barossa," interrupted Villiers, who hated reminiscences of the Peninsula. "There's a fellow of our's—old Chudleigh, one of the greatest bores you ever met, who has given me a

hundred different versions of it. He was also at that last place, you know, where the Duke licked the French so—"

"Do you mean Waterloo?"

"Yes, that's it. I never can remember the name, though I could almost fancy I've been there, old Chud has bored me so about it."

"Ah! the Guards *were* at Waterloo," observed the Major, dryly; "but in these pipe-clay times of peace, you only campaign in Hyde Park and the Phœnix. But, as I was saying, I don't like fellows shooting each other down, like Irish savages, if it can be avoided. What will your friend do?"

"Fight."

"That decides it, then. It is just like an affair I was concerned in once, on the march to Vittoria—"

"Ah! Vittoria's one of Chud's places," cried the Guardsman. "He has told me about that, I am sure. It's just the way his story begins—on the march to Vittoria, and that

sort of thing. Hadn't we better fix about our men now?"

"If you please," answered the Major, tartly, incensed at a second interruption.

"Then, let it be six o'clock, in the field behind the mill, on the London Road; and fire at twelve paces."

"*Six* o'clock! *Five* would be too late. You must make it four, or we shall have all the town for spectators."

"We will say four, then, though I hate turning out early, and that sort of thing; but, for once, I'll sit up all night. I can't manage it in any other way."

In spite of his irritation, the Major could not forbear laughing; and bidding the court-soldier adieu, he departed.

CHAPTER XII.

DAY found Lord Childars seated at a table, where he had passed the night, and letters lying before him, sealed with black, showed how he had been employed.

The long vigil had not tended to improve his appearance. His face was pale and haggard; his eyes drooped; and his head leant wearily on his hand. But as light streamed into the room, announcing the near approach of the appointed hour, he aroused himself, and completed his few remaining preparations. Soon afterwards, he was joined by Villiers.

"Why, Childars, what the deuce is t
matter with you?" said the Guardsman, w
having passed the night in smoking, him
had a spectral appearance. "You look a s
you'd been worried and pummelled by a
whole legion of blue devils. Keep your
spirits up, my boy: your pluck, I know,
never fails."

"But you don't expect a man in my position to be very lively, I suppose?" replied Lord Childars, with a faint smile.

"'Pon life, I don't see why you shouldn't. A crack shot like you, who can pink your man at the first fire, ought to go out with a mot, as Alvanley did, when he met—you know who I mean, that Irish fellow, who was always kicking up such a horrid row."

"But the fact is, Villiers, I am acting in this business against my own conscience. I have very strong opinions on the subject of duelling, and now I am flying in the face of

them. It is this makes me look so serious—and not, as I know you will believe, any thought of personal peril. But we have no time to discuss such points now. I think we should be moving."

"Yes, directly; but hadn't my fellow better give us a dose of something first? Soda-water and Cognac, and that sort of thing, is capital in the morning."

"Thank you. I won't take anything myself."

"Neither will I, then, though I've a perfect drought in my throat; and the thought of facing that old line fellow, with his stories about the Peninsula, completely palsies me. Still I exclaim—

> 'Come on, Macduff,
> 'And hanged be he who first cries—

I never can remember the rest, but you know what I mean."

They were soon ready to set forth. Lord Childars's cabriolet was at the door; the

pistol-case was thrown in; and, taking their seats, they drove off.

It was a raw, dull, sombre morning. The sky was sheathed in lead, like a king's corpse—or as if to repel the keen easterly wind, whose piercing blast smote everything on earth.

Not a soul was in the streets, except a few scattered policemen, leaning drowsily against lamp-posts, or in obscure doorways, and starting into unnatural vigilance at their approach. On clearing town, the scene became even more dreary. Fields and hedges, so gaily green in the sunshine, seemed to be tinged with black—hung with shadow, like a grim and evil prophecy; and no feathered warbler charmed away their gloom. The hardy tillers of the soil had not yet come to work; the plough was still lying idle, buried deep in the last night's furrow, and, far as the eye could reach, nothing relieved the solitude of the way.

Lord Childars was whip; and Villiers, leaning back in his seat, too fagged to disturb him, beguiled the time with swallowing yawns. At length, they reached the rendezvous.

They were first on the ground, and there was ten minutes to spare, but another cabriolet, driven at a furious pace, was seen approaching, and, as it drove up, Vavasour and Major Calvert sprang out. All raised hats; and, advancing to the middle of the field, the seconds measured the distance.

"I must now ask you, for the last time, if you are determined not to arrange this affair, Captain Villiers?" said Major Calvert, as they stood for a moment apart.

"Certainly, if you want us to—you know what I mean, and that sort of thing."

"Of course, apology will be indispensable."

"Then, there is an end of it, and we have only to fix the signal."

"It is a great pity, though. I have known affairs settled amicably on the ground, at

the last moment, and in the most honourable manner. We were in the lines of Torres Vedras—"

"Ah! then, I have heard about it. Chudleigh has told me all that ever happened at Torres Vedras, and an immense deal more. I assure you, if I were to sit down to it, I could write a history of the whole campaign, that would take the shine out of Napier's completely. But what is to be our signal?"

"I will clap hands," said the Major, chafed beyond control. "It is better than dropping a handkerchief."

During the adjustment of these preliminaries, Vavasour, not expecting any delay, looked on impatiently, his flushed cheek and lurid glances revealing too plainly the resentment, and stern implacable determination that weltered in his heart. Meanwhile, his hand was locked firmly on the pistol, eager to let loose its bolt.

With far different feelings Lord Childars

heard the fatal signal, and swinging round, with one upward glance, fired in the air. Scarcely had his pistol flashed, when he fell to the ground.

Villiers sprang to his assistance, but Vavasour, almost as he fired the too certain shot, bounded forward, and raised the wounded man in his arms. Lord Childars looked up, and struggled to speak.

"I owe — you — an — an apology, Mr. Vavasour," he said, in failing accents. "I was not justified in addressing you—as I did—I ask your pardon."

His eyes closed; a stream of blood oozed from his mouth; and he sank back on his enemy's bosom.

"What a horrid nuisance!" exclaimed Major Calvert. "But it is no use our staying here. Vavasour, we must be off at once."

"I do not intend to go," replied Vavasour. "Since I have committed a crime, I will abide the consequence."

CHAPTER XIII.

The human heart—and more especially when it beats in the tender bosom of woman, is an enigma baffling comprehension. Often, indeed, we cannot even account to our own selves, with any clearness, for its sympathies and impulses, binding us, as they then do, to objects and pursuits we must in any case but that in point, infallibly have shunned. Nor are we, perhaps, sensible that our judgment is misled, partial, blind. An infatuation has seized us, refusing to be persuaded, and sternly repelling conviction. Thus irresistibly swayed, the religious zealot main-

tains with fervour the wildest and most dangerous tenets—the politician adopts the errors as well as the principles of his party—the fond mother excuses or overlooks the most glaring imperfections of her child. And how much more potent this prepossession, this wilful bias, when dictated by love!

The feelings Vavasour had awakened in Millicent were, in their effect, a veil over the blemishes of his character. Even were she not unobservant of his imperious disposition and arbitrary self-will, these qualities are in themselves not distasteful to the sex, born to obey, yield, and submit. And then the instinctive perception that his soaring nature bowed in submission to her—that, however overbearing to others, to her he was ever gentle; and the assurance, so soon apparent to woman, when animated by a kindred feeling, that she had made an impression on his heart, invested his very defects with a claim to indulgence and consideration.

And were not the conduct and bearing of Lord Childars equally significant? Assuredly; but to her, possessed with the image of another, they were far from being the same. She admired Lord Childars—was charmed by the unaffected manliness of his character, the truthfulness of his feelings, the noble liberality of his opinions. She felt grateful to him, too, for kindness and courtesy; and was flattered and gratified by his attentions. It did not strike her that such things had a deeper source than the emotions of the moment—that they sprang from a heart captivated by her charms—that they were, in fact, the earnest and passionate homage of an ardent lover. Well had it been for her if it had!

Like all Brighton, she soon heard of the duel, reported at first, to have terminated fatally for Lord Childars, who was said to have died on the spot. The *Brighton Guardian*, however, had contradicted the rumour, asserting that he was still alive,

though in a very precarious condition; and that Sir Benjamin Brodie, who had been called in by Villiers, had arrived from London to attend him. Millicent's grief was alleviated by this bulletin, but it did not diminish her anxiety. She had not, however, communicated what had taken place to Mrs. Grantley, fearing the effect of such disastrous tidings, and she concerted with their few visitors to keep her in ignorance. But in carrying out this design, it cost her a great effort to appear composed, when, in truth, her heart was bleeding, and she longed to throw herself in the arms of her loved friend, and ask for sympathy and consolation.

Fanny Raymond and her uncle, the good old Judge, called in the afternoon, and insisted on taking Mrs. Grantley for a drive, in order to give Millicent a little time to herself, and, having a slight headache, she easily excused herself from accompanying them. She could now indulge sorrow without re-

straint, and relieve in some measure her overcharged heart. What were the thoughts, how deep and poignant the feelings, that oppressed and distracted her, even her own bewildered mind could not perfectly comprehend. But they were arrested at last, by the appearance of a servant, announcing that Mr. Vavasour had called, and wished to speak to her.

She could not repress some agitation, on entering the drawing-room, at the sad expression of his face; and, with all her efforts at concealment, traces of her recent emotion still made themselves apparent.

"You have heard all about this affair, of course?" said Vavasour, regarding her steadfastly. "I thought my aunt might be anxious, and have come to say Lord Childars is pronounced out of danger."

"Oh! how glad I am!" exclaimed Millicent, the ready tears springing to her eyes, though a deepened colour, like the warm sun-

shine of April, showed they were tears of joy. "Now I may break it to mamma, before she is told by any one else; for I have not yet had the courage to tell her. You have indeed relieved me of a weight of sorrow.

Vavasour bit his lip.—"Lord Childars would be very much flattered, were he aware you have been so interested about him," he said; "for I am persuaded he cherishes a very sincere interest for you."—Millicent blushed deeply, but Vavasour, regarding her with a lightning gaze, saw it was not with triumph. "You must forgive me," he continued, in a softened tone, "if I think it quite unfair that all your sympathy should have been engrossed by him."

"But it was not," returned Millicent, with trembling lips.

"Do you—can you say so? Then repeat it—tell me once more. Say at least, I had some place in your thoughts, though you were more concerned for him."

"And can you think I was? Bound as I am to Mrs. Grantley, could I be indifferent about one so nearly related to her, and whom I conceived to be so seriously compromised? Be assured, I was not. My concern for Lord Childars — wounded and dying as I supposed him—was not greater than I felt for you."

"Then I must admit you impartial," returned Vavasour, in a tone of disappointment. "You looked with the same feelings on me, and on my adversary."

"Adversary! how strange and discordant that word seems to sound. I must not ask you how you came to apply it to Lord Childars, though I thought you friends; but I hope——yet you will think me officious, perhaps, for speaking on the subject!"

"No! no! pray go on. I must feel only too flattered that my affairs can interest you at all."

"I would say, I hope Lord Childars is no longer your adversary, or that, if you can-

not be friends, there is at least no fear of your having further contention."

"There is none on my part, I assure you, for it is a thing I could not be guilty of. If a person offers me insult, I resent it, but I never contend with any one."

"I see I have offended you; but, you must acknowledge, you forced me to explain myself."

"Yes, yes; and you have said nothing I could gainsay. Would that I, too, could explain myself—could tell you what it consumes me to conceal, though I cannot utter it. Do not turn away. Bear with me a few moments; for this, perhaps, is the last time we shall ever meet."

But Millicent, dreading to meet his gaze, averted her head, making no reply.

"You are silent," pursued Vavasour, with an anxious look. "You do not care that we are to part, though it is for ever. You will let me go without one kind word."

"No, I will not."

"No?—truly, no? Do I understand you rightly?"

"Most certainly! Remembering the pleasure I have experienced in your friendship, it would be surprising if I did not wish you every happiness, and feel sorry we are not to meet again. I cannot forget, either, that you lately perilled your life to afford me protection: this is a permanent claim on my gratitude and esteem."

"How cold are these terms to me! and yet your voice makes them music. Millicent! dear Millicent!—let me call you so *once*, at least—what a strange power you have over me. I came here to bid you farewell—to tear myself from you for ever; and my resolution, so stringent in promise, now under the spell of your presence, vanishes like mist. You say, you are sorry we are to part: bid me remain—tell me not to leave you; and no inducement could entice me away. I am

yours—wholly, for ever yours, as a slave is the creature of his master. But say, dear Millicent, say you accept my love—that you return it."

Supreme happiness has no voice; and Millicent still turned away her face—was still silent.

"You conceal my fate, but you do not repel me," said Vavasour, in passionate accents. "At least, look at me, Millicent: let me read my sentence in your face."

She *did* look at him; and one glance—one timid and rapid glance, beaming the soft light of tender affection, not to be told in words, met his eye, enraptured and fascinated by her dream-like beauty, and calling, by intense admiration, the brilliant glow of modesty to her cheek. Dazzled, wild with joy, Vavasour would have clasped her to his heart; but, seeing his design, she gently evaded him. Love had mastered her for a moment, but it was soon subdued; and now she was

calm, collected, and mistress of herself once more.

"Will you not speak to me, dear Millicent?" said Vavasour. "Will you not answer me?"

"It may seem ungenerous that I do not, when you offer me what, in a worldly point of view, might gratify the proudest, but my position is a peculiar one. You will—I am sure you will—make allowance for its requirements."

"Do they bind you to silence, dear Millicent?"

"Yes; for whatever may be my feelings, whatever the dictate of my heart, I can come to no decision of myself. You have heard what I was"—Vavasour changed colour—"you know what I am; and she who raised me from the dust, who cherishes me as her child, and whom I love and revere more than a parent, is alone entitled to fix my destiny."

Vavasour paused a moment. A host of

conflicting passions warred in his bosom, triumphing by turns; but all, after a brief, fierce struggle, succumbed to the influence of Millicent's beauty.

"I understand and appreciate your motives," he said; "but this suspense is insupportable. You cannot suppose that Mrs. Grantley will object to me, her own nephew, and heir to her only brother! Then, do not leave me distracted with doubt, dear Millicent, when one word, a single word of hope, will make me happy."

"Oh! not now!—not now! Do not urge me to speak now. And here is the carriage, bringing mamma home. I must leave you. I cannot stay to meet her." And, before Vavasour could prevent her, she was gone.

Mrs. Grantley soon appeared. She entered alone, having taken leave of her friends at the door, and, apprised by a servant of Vavasour's visit, had come at once to the drawing-room.

"I cannot compliment you on your looks," she said, as they shook hands. "What has been the matter, that we did not see you yesterday?"

"Pray believe I should have been too happy to come, if something had not occurred to prevent me," replied Vavasour. "I will tell you what it was another time, when I am sure you will consider it a reasonable excuse. Now, if you can spare a few minutes, I am going to tax your patience on another subject—to ask you to exert your good offices for me."

"In what way? If I can really be of any service, you know you may command me."

"Thank you! thank you! I knew you would say so; for I felt confident of your affection, though Millicent, when I urged it, seemed to doubt me."

"Millicent?" said Mrs. Grantley, suddenly looking grave. "Why Millicent?"

"It is about her I wish to speak," replied

Vavasour, a little embarrassed. "I love her, madam—truly and devotedly; I desire your permission to ask her hand, and your interest to obtain it."

Mrs. Grantley turned her eyes on the floor, and mused a moment. "You have told Millicent?" she said, at length.

"I have made her acquainted with my feelings, and let her know that my future happiness depended on her. Each moment I feel this more sensibly, more acutely; and impediments, or what seem such—anything, in fact, that prolongs my suspense—strike the conviction deeper."

"And what is Millicent's answer?" asked Mrs. Grantley.

"She gave none, but referred me to you."

"Then she has acted like herself, rightly and well! It is a question I am best qualified to decide, being myself a Vavasour, and knowing our fatal characteristics. Do you forget that no marriage in our family was ever happy?"

"Is it possible you can think of such an idle tale, at such a moment? It is not treating me kindly, madam. You will not, surely, object to a union desired so earnestly by me, and so eligible for Millicent?"

"These are considerations I cannot allow myself to entertain. I do not seek Millicent's aggrandisement, but her happiness; and putting aside what you call an idle tale, a passion of a few days' growth, which has urged your hasty proposal, offers little surety for her future. I know you believe otherwise—I know you think it impossible your feelings can ever change. But these are the transports of a lover, and, when the delusion is past, will leave only bitterness behind."

"They yield bitterness enough now, in the opposition and disparagement you evince to them. Have I had to overcome nothing, do you think—no feelings of caste or race, no strong and inveterate habits of thought—before my purpose was fixed? I assure you,

madam, this passion of a few days' growth, as you slightingly call it, is vital, immutable: otherwise it could not have made me forget everything else—it could not have so completely enthralled me."

"Then you have my pity," said Mrs. Grantley, in a tone of deep tenderness.

"Pity! Do you mean by this my suit is inadmissible? Do you mean you will not sanction it?"

"No; but my sanction must depend on another voice—a voice that will not give you even pity—a voice no human affection has ever been able to influence. You know your father!"

Vavasour turned pale, but speedily recovered himself. "I am past the age of leading-strings," he said, "and have to account for my actions to none but myself. I am not to be ruled by the caprices of my father."

"Still you must obtain his approval of your addresses before I can give them mine.

I know too well the unhappiness that would be in store for Millicent, did I not insist on this. Write to him, then, and remember your fate will rest on his answer."

"Will nothing induce you to forego his consent?"

"Nothing! Much as I feel for you—deeply as you have interested me, on this point I must be peremptory."

"Then, I must submit. But, of course, I am not bound to acquaint my father with Millicent's whole history, or anything that may, in his estimation, tell against her; and therefore I shall content myself with saying she is your adopted child. Meanwhile, you will not, I hope, debar me from seeing her?"

"I shall not like to do so," replied Mrs. Grantley, after hesitating a moment; "but I must exact a promise from you that, till you hear from your father, this subject shall not be mentioned. You must meet as if your proposal had never been uttered."

"Be it so!" returned Vavasour. "I promise."

While they thus conversed, Millicent, in the privacy of her own chamber, was indulging emotions, pleasurable as innocent and ardent love could excite. She had reached the hour most triumphant in the whole existence of woman, and the bosom usually so placid now swelled with pride, with joyous hope, with sweet and rapturous fruition. Happy infatuation! who, in the blossom of such a moment, could foresee the future fruit.

The door opened softly, and Mrs. Grantley entered. The expression of her face, so kind and benignant, yet so full of concern, checked Millicent's joy, and let her know she had been told all. With an eager exclamation, the poor girl hurried forward, and threw herself in Mrs. Grantley's arms.

"I will not leave you, dear mamma," she cried; "I will never, never leave you."

"No, dear child," replied Mrs. Grantley; "never, while I live. But tell me only a word, Milly—do you love him?"

"Yes, yes!"—And she hid her burning cheek in her embrace.

CHAPTER XIV.

VAVASOUR did not fail to make use of Mrs. Grantley's permission to call on Millicent, adhering rigidly, though with difficulty, to the stipulation that he was not to prosecute his addresses. At first, there was a degree of constraint in Millicent's manner, scarcely separable from the delicacy and uncertainty of her position, but it wore off; and though rigorously controlling her feelings, she found manifest pleasure in his society. Thus, tranquilly but rapidly, passed several days.

Mrs. Grantley was seated on the balcony, inhaling with evident enjoyment the refresh-

ing sea-breeze; and Vavasour, who had been conversing with her, fell back to Millicent, who was engaged drawing, within.

"Ah, a flower?" he said, glancing at the unfinished colours. "It's name? what is it to be?"

"You mean to insinuate I am like the sign-painter," replied Millicent, gaily; "and should give the explanatory inscription—this *is* a lion."

"Oh, no! how can you think me such a barbarian? The fact is, I am not artist enough to foresee what is yet to be done, or sufficiently versed in botany to recognise what you have finished."

"Indeed! Then I must lend you Mrs. Loudon's essays, and if you have a good memory, and persevere, you will soon become a perfect gardener."

"A lofty vocation, certainly, but you must be my instructress. And, to begin, tell me what you have here?"

"Well, it is a camelia-bud. Do you think you will remember that?"—And she looked up at him with her bright smile.

To her surprise, Vavasour had turned deadly pale. He recollected that a camelia-bud, dropped accidentally by her, had nearly made him a murderer.

"Yes, yes," he said, hurriedly, and striving to disguise his agitation, "I shall remember that. Do you forget that you lately gave me one?"

It was now for Millicent to falter: in an instant the whole truth, with its lamentable and disastrous sequel, flashed through her mind, and she murmured an unmeaning answer.

"May I beg that drawing of you, when it is finished?" said Vavasour.

"Oh, no! not that. I will give you some other, with great pleasure, but not that."

"And why is that to be excepted?" asked Mrs. Grantley, approaching from the win-

dow. "I am sure it is very pretty, and highly creditable to your pencil."

Millicent would scarcely have known how to reply ; but to her great relief, a servant diverted Mrs. Grantley's attention, presenting the card of a visiter.

"It is your father," said Mrs. Grantley, to Vavasour. "I had rather we had not met, but since he has at last sought me, I must see him. The meeting will be a painful one, and we had better be alone."

"I think you had," replied Vavasour. "But no ! he is here !"

A voice, indeed, was heard at the door, which next moment was rudely flung open, and Sir Hildred Vavasour entered.

He was a tall, stately old man, with a face preternaturally pale, eyes grey and cold, and scant silver hair, though his figure, far from showing any trace of decay, was, for his years, singularly erect. His stern features resembled

strongly those of his son, but every characteristic was more striking; and step, air, and gesture, all stamped with the same mould, equally indicated his ruling principle.

"I am sorry to have to intrude upon you, madam," he said to Mrs. Grantley, with a slight inclination; "and after the lapse of so many years, you will doubtless think the time has gone by when we should have occasion to hold any communication. I had hoped so, too; but hearing my son was under your roof—that the *young lady*" (and his lip curled contemptuously) "mentioned in his letter to me, was with him—and that you, too, were here, I have taken the liberty to come into your room uninvited, that I may at once, and before you all, for ever settle this matter."

"Is that in your power?" said Vavasour, impatiently.

"One moment, sir," resumed his father. "I am requested to consent that you shall pay your addresses to this young person, and

I have come a hundred miles to say I never will. If you persist in your overtures, it will be in defiance of my authority."

"And let me assure you, it will be also in defiance of mine," replied Mrs. Grantley, wearing for a moment a look as haughty as his own, though she quickly corrected it. "But now my nephew is acquainted with your wishes, he will no doubt abide by them."

"Pardon me, madam," cried Vavasour: "I have also wishes of my own to consult—hopes, feelings, connected and bound up with this matter. My father is aware I am accustomed in all things to decide for myself."

"On the present occasion, the decision rests with me, sir," cried Sir Hildred, with kindling eyes; "and fortunate it is I have power to enforce my will, or you would degrade and disgrace me."

"Before you say the connexion would disgrace you, sir," said Mrs. Grantley, "you should know whether you are able to form it.

Your son's addresses have not as yet received any encouragement from Miss Rennel, who, I beg to say, would confer honour on any family she entered."

"We have, I know, the misfortune to differ on these subjects, madam," returned Sir Hildred, before Vavasour could speak. "You yourself married a trader, or the son of one, who, I believe, was no great honour to any of us; and, perhaps, it is not surprising you should think my son would be honoured by marrying your charity-child—the bantling of some village slut—a colliery-girl! You see, sir, I have discovered who the young lady is!"

Vavasour made no reply: he only turned one glance upon him, but it was a glance few but Sir Hildred could have met unmoved. Mrs. Grantley, judging from her agitated looks, was equally affected, but it was with different feelings.

"You seem to forget where you are, Sir Hildred Vavasour, and who you are speaking

of," she said. "The language you have used is so entirely uncalled for, and so insulting to Miss Rennel and myself, that were you any one but my brother, I should put an end to this interview, by leaving the room. But I still remember our tie of kindred, sir, though so long forgotten and disclaimed by you."

"I am willing that it should be by yourself, also, madam."

"It is well, sir. I do not seek to revive old associations or old animosities. Since you came to my house, I was even willing, as a proof that I could forget the past, to ask you——" she stopped, as if unable to bring herself to the confession, but then proceeded—"yes, to ask your forgiveness, sir. But your words remind me you have no pity—that only one indomitable feeling rules and dictates all your actions; and I will spare you the bitter memory of having withheld it. I have little more to say. Miss Rennel, whatever she once was—and she was ever

pure and noble and good—is now as my daughter."—And feeling Millicent's trembling hand on hers, she clasped it tenderly.—"I stand to her as a mother; and, as such, I should from the first have rejected your alliance, considering your proud name would bring only a brand and a curse upon her; but my heart warmed to your son. I could not refuse him the chance of obtaining your consent to his addresses, though knowing it was hopeless. You have decided for me how his proposal is to be received."

"No, madam, you are wrong," cried Vavasour, vehemently. "He cannot decide for you, any more than for me; nor can you act for Miss Rennel. The affair rests between her and myself, and concerns us alone. I am not a child or a puppet, to be moved by the will and hands of others, but a man, free and unshackled. I offer Miss Rennel my hand, my life, my fortune: let her speak for herself, and say if she will accept me."

"Before she does so," said Sir Hildred, bitterly, "let her know the fortune you speak of is a word—a mere sound, worthless as air."

"The Vavasour estates, I believe, are entailed, sir," said Vavasour, with a triumphant curl of his lip.

"Yes, to certain limits, but those limits have been covered. I AM THE LAST OF THE ENTAIL."

Vavasour seemed confounded.

"Now, sir," pursued Sir Hildred, "now ask her again if she will accept you—accept a pauper, a beggar; I think you will discover she has altered her mind."

"You are mistaken, sir," said Millicent, in a firm voice, encouraged by a gesture of assent from Mrs. Grantley: "my determination is unchanged; though I am resolved to decline the proposal Mr. Vavasour has made me. I hope he will not think my decision influenced by any unworthy motive. I deeply feel his kindness, and shall remember it with gratitude."

"You hear, sir, I was right," cried Sir Hildred. "She rejects you—throws you off like a log. If it was anything but your fortune she valued, why not say this before?"

Vavasour looked inquiringly at Millicent, but she did not answer the appeal. The feelings which had kept her silent, and still ruled her, repressing every sentiment of anger and indignation, were not of a character to seek display. Remembering who Sir Hildred was, she preferred to smart under the insults he inflicted, to lie under the obloquy of his imputations, to submit in silence to his opprobrious reproaches, rather than retort. The same deep gratitude to Mrs. Grantley had prevented her from expressing earlier any opinion on Vavasour's proposal, assured she, at least, would understand her motives, and comforting and strengthening herself with this conviction. Yet even to her strong endurance, fortified as it thus was, the trial was

severe, outraging every impulse of her refined and gentle nature, and wounding her tenderest sensibilities.

She stood in meek silence, with eyes fixed on the floor, and betraying emotion only in their throbbing lids. These, however, were more eloquent than words, and vindicated her more effectually. And that marble stillness, that deep settled sorrow, that look of angelic patience, so shrinking yet so brave, offered Vavasour another revelation. Their union, though desired no less earnestly than at first, had become impossible, but he had found a salvo for his pride: *she loved him.*

"I believe, sir, you do not interpret Miss Rennel correctly," he said to his father, with eyes flashing fire, "but, whether or not, the circumstances you mention disqualify me from being her suitor. I do not see, therefore, that there is any necessity to prolong this

conference further, and I am deeply sorry it has lasted so long."

With these words, he gave his hand to Mrs. Grantley, bent politely, though formally, to Millicent, and turned from the room, accompanied by Sir Hildred.

CHAPTER XV.

It is in vain to scrutinise the mechanism of that Hand whose ways are past finding out; but it would appear, on looking narrowly at human nature, that some are destined to a more than ordinary share of the world's trials and sorrows, and that these very adversities give them strength for the burden. So it was with Millicent. Trouble either created in her character new elements of endurance, equal to the pressure of the occasion, or developed a vigour natural and inherent, but hitherto unknown. She possessed the rare power of repelling and rising over difficulties,

a vital buoyancy, constantly struggling upward; and two or three days after her parting with Vavasour, few would have judged, from her quiet and placid demeanour, that she had sustained a disappointment fatal to her peace, joy, and happiness.

After another week, they returned to Winstone, Mrs. Grantley feeling an invalid's anxiety to be at home, and Millicent, though not suffering her wishes to appear, but too glad to leave a place associated with such sad recollections. At Winstone she could more completely occupy and divert her thoughts, dividing time between duties and study, the village school, the garden, and the green lanes: above all, attending with filial care on Mrs. Grantley.

Amidst these employments, she cherished one relaxation — an active correspondence with Fanny Raymond, and the affection and sympathy thus interchanged were a source of

constant gratulation. Soon a letter announced, what she was well prepared to hear, that Fanny had become engaged to Oswald, and after another short interval, tidings came of the nuptial day. She was now reminded of an ancient promise to officiate as bridesmaid, and entreated, in the most pressing terms, and by all the ties and claims of friendship, to spend the few intervening weeks in London, as the bride and bridegroom were to set out for the Continent immediately after the ceremony, and it was not settled when they would return.

when you are so much confined, and Fanny has so many friends, she can very well dispense with me."

"And you think I cannot?" returned Mrs. Grantley, with a fond smile. "Now know I mean to throw off your yoke, and assert my independence, if it be only to learn self-denial. Moreover, like all rebels, having got the authority into my own hands, I shall set up for a despot, and positively enforce your departure."

"This is the way you would always forego your own comfort, dear mamma; but——"

"Ah! you may talk, and protest, and put on your appealing looks, but all is no use, Miss Milly. I have declared my resolution, and go you must."

Vain indeed were Millicent's entreaties and protestations: Mrs. Grantley remained resolute, and the day was fixed for the journey. Finding opposition useless, Millicent, with an abnegation peculiar to herself, tried

to appear gratified, that the pains taken to afford her pleasure might not be thrown away: but, in secret, her wish to decline the invitation continued unchanged.

When the dreaded moment arrived, it was with a heavy heart she bade adieu to Mrs. Grantley, lingering fondly in her arms, and unable to restrain emotion. On reaching the porch, she turned back to the hall, and again pressed her trembling lips on her cheek; then she entered the carriage, and was borne away.

CHAPTER XVI.

The train had just reached the station in Euston-square, and the passengers jumped out in a body, as if a moment's delay endangered existence. In an instant the spacious platform was one swarm of human beings, moving in every possible direction, yet without jostling or impeding each other. Still Millicent sat in the carriage, deafened, bewildered, while passengers, porters, and cabmen, all intent on different objects, shouting, hallooing, and driving, mingled their discord with the rolling of luggage-barrows and the whistling

of the engine. Then came a sudden hush, and the platform was again clear.

As Millicent alighted, Fanny, who was standing at the waiting-room door, ran forward to meet her, while a tall footman hastened to secure the luggage. The sight of her loved friend, beaming happy smiles, and more than usual sprightliness, had an instantaneous effect on Millicent; and, banishing apprehensions, she caught a congenial spirit, chatting gaily with Fanny, as the carriage moved off for Belgravia.

"I have such a piece of news for you," said

my recollecting it, Miss Quiz? You live in such a vortex yourself, you do not reflect that a ball is quite an event to me."

"Well, then, I may just tell you there is another event coming off."

"And this, I suppose, will be duly whispered in the fashionable intelligence, in the terms and manner following:—'We understand that Oswald Harper, Esq., son of the wealthy baronet of that name, will immediately lead to the hymeneal ——' "

"Foregone conclusion! and so your malice is quite thrown away, Milly, and I bid you mortal defiance. Know, moreover, the event aforesaid is not a wedding, but a ball, and what is better, a bal masque."

"And pray how does this announcement concern me?"

"Very deeply: for you are to be one of the masqueraders. Ah! I thought I should surprise you, but it is now all arranged, even to

your character, unless you have an especial favourite of your own. What do you say to——"

"What will *you* say, Fanny, if I beg you to excuse my going?"

"What?—why, that you are a monster, and any excuse out of the question. Here have I had such fighting and intriguing and bribing to get you a ticket, carrying it off from whole battalions of competitors, and now you hesitate to make use of it. Positively, you are too bad, Milly."

"But, my dearest Fanny, I have no spirits for such a scene, and when I tell you all, I know you will acknowledge this wild gaiety would be painful to me."

"No, I won't," said Fanny, with affected vehemence, though caressing her friend's hand; "and I won't hear you, won't have anything to say to you, unless you first promise to go: then you shall be my own Milly again."

"Well, to please you then, I promise—that is, if mamma approves of it."

"Which I know she will, and I shall write to her to-morrow myself, and ask her, so there shall be no loophole that the smallest Milly in the world could creep out of. You may laugh, but I am in earnest."

"Oh, yes! I see that. And now you have settled everything your own way, do tell me where we are; for this must indeed be London?"

It was Regent-street, glistening and sparkling in its noon-day pride. The palace-like houses, and their regal shops, displaying in mirror windows the most precious wares of the earth, heaped in grand and untold profusion—the brilliant equipages whirling along with the swiftness of thought—the pavements crowded with dashing beaux and beauteous dames, arrayed in every colour of the rainbow, with strolling guardsmen, bustling traders, and fiercely-moustachoed foreigners, and the endless train of massive omnibuses,

bearing new crowds of active and motley passengers, with the bright sunshine gleaming over all, indeed constituted a scene no city but London could present.

Everything was so fresh to Millicent, and appeared so striking, that she could now speak of nothing but objects around, till, after a short interval, they entered the courtly region of Belgravia, and the carriage drew up at her friend's mansion. Soon she was installed in noble apartments, unfolding to Fanny's sympathising ear, secrets she had yet scarcely acknowledged to her own heart.

Some days had elapsed, and Millicent was alone in her chamber, when Fanny, who had been out all the morning, came in, laughing.

"Well, Milly, I have finished your business," she said, "and now I can tell you what I have been doing: so know, yesterday I had a letter from Mrs. Grantley, all in the strictest confidence, approving highly of your going to the bal masque, and empowering me to

provide you with costume; and I have now settled everything. I have let Leleux have no rest till your dress was completed, and have brought one of her handmaids away in the carriage, as fast as we could come, that you may see how you like it. Now am I not the promptest creature in the world?"

"You are certainly one of the wildest," replied Millicent, turning her arm fondly round her waist.

"Ungrateful! is this my reward—and after I have kept my secret too, for more than thirty hours, though actually consuming to tell it."

"Well, I must scold you; but you know, for all that, I am deeply sensible of your kindness, dear Fanny. I should be most ungrateful were I not."

"Then, you will keep your thoughts on that subject to yourself, if you please. And now, dearest Milly, do let me have up the kidnapped handmaid, and transform you into

Marguerite de Valois. I am so anxious to see you draped. It will be so charming, will it not?—you as Marguerite, I as Queen Claude, and Oswald as Francis the First."

While Millicent complied with Fanny's wishes, a scene somewhat similar was passing in the next house, occupied by Mrs. Clinton and the artless Harriet, who, through the interference of a titled friend, had also procured admission for the bal masque, and, by a singular coincidence, Harriet insisted on going in the very character of Marguerite de Valois, selected for Millicent.

"Well, you have your whim now, Harriet," observed Mrs. Clinton, when the costume was brought home; "and a nice expense it will be—not that I care about expense, if there were any satisfaction in it; but those old-fashioned characters have quite gone out. For my part, I cannot think what can have put such a ridiculous notion into your head."

Harriet was a little confused.

"Now, don't colour up, and look so guilty, Harriet," pursued the suspicious stepmother. "That's not the way I behave to you—being so sly, and having secret motives for things, but I speak out my whole mind. If you've any particular reason for choosing the character, tell it me, and I shall be satisfied."

"Lor, mamma! how you talk! I'm sure Marguerite's a very nice character, and there's ever so much said about her in the Stories out of the History of France, and very likely in the history itself, but you want to set me against her, I know, just because I won't have Dud go as Francis the First. And he likes the character I chose for him, much better: don't you, Dud?"

"Yes, Har-yot," replied the compliant Dudley.

"Character, indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Clinton. "To think of sending him to the

ball as Guy Fawkes! But I wash my hands of it. You shall both do as you please, and then, if disappointment is the result, no blame can happen to me."

"I'm sure we shall be very comfortable," replied Harriet. "Dud has always had a fancy for being Guy Fawkes ever since the boys carried him off, when he was a little fellow: haven't you, Dud?"

"Yes, Har-yot."

"And now when I've got my dress on, I'll come down and show you, mamma, shall I?"

"Oh, yes, if you like."

As Harriet disappeared, a servant announced Lady Gresham.

"You have just come in time to see Harriet's dress, Lady Gresham," said Mrs. Clinton, as the Peeress sat down. "You know she persists in going as Marguerite de Valois."

"Yes, and it will do very well," replied

Lady Gresham; "for I find that historical characters are all the rage—quite Hoyle, I assure you."

"But to think of this dear boy going as Guy Fawkes!"

"Oh, it doesn't matter, my dear, what parts the men take—only they should act up to them—try and preserve keeping, as it were—Mr. Dudley must throw a little life into it—be more brisk and confident."

"That's what I am always impressing on him, and I know he could do it if he liked. He has very good abilities, but he wants confidence, Lady Gresham; and, as I tell him, that is no recommendation to a lady—though Harriet likes him very well in every other respect."

Dud hung his head.

"Oh! that is a shocking fault—shocking, particularly when a lady is in the case," said Lady Gresham. "You must remember, Mr.

Dudley, that paying addresses to a lady is something like bird-catching, and you'll never undermine your cousin's heart unless you are brisk enough to put a little salt on her tail."

"There, Dudley! Now I hope you'll mind what Lady Gresham says, and behave accordingly."

"Yes, aunt."

Further conversation was prevented by the entrance of Harriet, in full costume, and certainly presenting an appearance not unworthy of a Queen. Lady Gresham, always taken by good looks, was loud in commendation, and the amorous Dud, with a loquacity perfectly unaccountable, actually delivered himself of a dozen words proposing that he should thereupon array himself as Guy.

"Oh, no, Dud!" cried Harriet. "I've seen your dress once, and I am sure I shall not wait here till you put it on: so pray don't

"No, Har-yot."

"That's the way you always thwart him, Harriet," observed Mrs. Clinton. "It's shameful!"

"Indeed, it is very wrong, my dear," remarked Lady Gresham; "not at all Hoyle, I assure you."

"Well, he can dress himself if he likes," returned Harriet, poutingly, "but I needn't stay for him, and I won't——" And she left the room.

On entering her own apartment, her maid, who was waiting her appearance, with a smile of great significance gave her a note, which she found to contain these words:

"My dearest Harriet,

"What happiness your little note has brought me, in the assurance I shall meet you at the bal masque, in the character we arranged. I send you a drawing of my costume of Francis the First, that you may recognise

me at once, without alarming that old ogress your stepmother. A carriage will be in waiting, that will soon carry you out of her clutches, and make you the wife of

"Your ever devoted

"CHARLES BELWOOD."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE last bal masque at the Opera House is not such a remote event, but that all the world, from Hyde Park to Pimlico, may with ease recollect it. Announced under auspices that guaranteed exclusiveness, it had immediately secured the attention and support of the whole beau monde, creating a competition for tickets very productive to the projectors. Crowds of applicants, indeed, were unable to obtain them, at any possible premium, and on the eventful night, long before the hour for opening doors, every avenue to the theatre was unapproachable.

To pass over the scene under the stately arcade, and in the Haymarket, where the canaille and the coaches battled for supremacy, what a picture met the enraptured eye on entering the theatre! The high-soaring roof was one blaze of light, flashing brightly down on the successive tiers of boxes, hung with gorgeous decorations, and sparkling with an assemblage of brilliant masques. Pit and stage were boarded into one, forming a vast area for dancers, closed by a scene which, combining the magic illusions of light and colour, created an impression of distance perfectly bewildering. Statues of purest marble—crystal fountains, beaming the reflected light, and playing before illuminated pictures — orange-trees, grottoes, cascades, invited attention at every turn, and, while the eye was thus captivated, soft and impassioned music charmed and enchained the ear.

After the large party Millicent accompanied had danced some quadrilles, they

spread about, and Millicent found herself with Fanny and Oswald in a pavilion, closely masked, and listening to the remarks around.

"I know you, I think," observed a sturdy-looking mask to his neighbour.

"And *I* think you don't," was the reply.

"It's impossible I can be mistaken: you are Captain Villiers."

"My dear sir, you must be out of your mind. What can have put such a thing into your—— you know what I mean. I Captain Villiers? Ridiculous!"

"Very good manœuvring, Captain, but I'm too old a soldier. Now, I'll just tell you what I did once, the night before the storming of Badajos, when——"

"No, no, don't: Chudleigh told me about it, I'm sure; and I can't stop now." He was making off, when he ran against a person coming in, dressed, like Oswald Harper, in the splendid costume of Francis the First.

"Why, Villiers, where are you flying to?"

said the monarch—and Millicent th
she recognised the voice of Lord Ch
though he had slightly disguised it.—"
nearly thrown me down. What'
matter?"

"Who are you, that you know m
returned Villiers, without heeding
quiries.

"My dear fellow, it does not requir
penetration to know you, when you
your mask in your hand. But what a
running away for?"

"The night before the storming

"Good! good!" roared the Major. "Who is he?"

"It must be Keeley," replied Lord Childars: "no one else could do it."

"Mr. Keeley, I am delighted at the opportunity of making your acquaintance, sir," cried the Major, "and the more so as I see you in your natural element of farce."—And he grasped the mask's hand with such fervour, that he made him cry out, throwing the audience into convulsions of laughter. In another moment a whisper ran round of "Keeley! Keeley!" and there was a general rush to the pavilion.

"Let me go!" cried the arrested mask. "Aunt! Har-yot! where are you?"

"How good! how very good!" resounded on all sides—"so natural."

"I believe he *is* a natural," remarked Oswald Harper to Millicent.

"My dear Keeley, let me prevail on you"—— began the Major, taking the mask's arm.

"I am not Keeley, I tell you: I'm Guy," returned the mask. "Leave me alone, will you?"

And freeing himself from the Major, he pushed his way out.

In the hubbub that ensued, Lord Childars espied Oswald Harper.

"Ha, another Francis?" he exclaimed. "I see there are six Richmonds in the field. How are you, Wentworth?"

"You are wrong, I assure you," replied Oswald. "My name is not Wentworth, nor do I know who you mean."

"My dear fellow, will you have the audacity to deny that you are my old schoolfellow and college-chum, Wentworth? Why, I could swear to your voice among a thousand, if you covered your face with a bushel. You laugh, Lady Amelia! is it at Wentworth's impudence, or my penetration?"

"Oh, your penetration, of course, Lord Childars," replied Fanny.

"Lord Childars! no! no! Mr. Jenkins, if you please."

"Well, Mr. Jenkins then, but do not delude yourself with the impression that I am Lady Amelia, or Lady anybody."

"My dear Lady Amelia, your practice of persuading people out of their senses, as well as out of their hearts, is so generally submitted to, that as far as you are yourself concerned, you may make me believe anything, but as for this dog, Wentworth, whom I have known from the days of his faghood, I am ready to make oath, by your divinity Cupid, that he is Wentworth's self, and no other."

"His other self, then, Royal Jenkins," replied Oswald, "though to be candid, your oaths are of no more weight than Ancient Pistol's. Swear not, Jenkins, swear not at all, or if thou needst must swear, swear by thine own wisdom, and I'll not believe thee.

"Could you suppose, Lady Amelia," said

Lord Childars, "that this fellow had served me for a term of years in the respective capacities of slave, toady, and bedmaker?—that I have made Latin verses for him by the dozen, and saved him more chastisements than he has hairs on his head?—for the rogue is bald, and wears a wig."

"O Jenkins, Jenkins, wherefore art thou Jenkins?" cried Oswald, laughing.

"You hear, he has been reading up Romeo," resumed Lord Childars to Fanny, "and yet he is so irreclaimably deuse, that if you asked him who wrote the play, his answer would be Finis."

"Ha! ha!" cried Fanny. "You are Sir Benjamin Backbite, I think, instead of Francis the First."

"Then you must be Lady Teazle."

"Neither Lady Teazle nor Lady Amelia."

"Do you mean to say, then, I don't know you?"

"Not exactly; but tell me first if you know

my friend."—And, with a little playful malice, she laid her hand on Millicent.

"I should think so," said Lord Childars. "She is——" He stopped abruptly, gave a slight start, and added, in an altered voice, "I—I may—I may have mistaken."

As he spoke, a large party swept in, causing such a pressure, that Millicent, much agitated at what had passed, would gladly have escaped to the parterre. Several minutes elapsed, however, before she could rise from her seat.

"If you have no wish to stay here longer, had we not better join the promenade?" she then said, in tones subdued by feeling; and, turning with these words, she beheld, not Fanny and Oswald, but a stranger, dressed in the magnificent costume of an Albanian chieftain.

The Greek made a motion of surprise, but added quickly, "Certainly, if you wish. I

shall be most proud and happy to attend you."

She would not have waited his answer, but before she could fly, his voice, only too familiar, chained her to the spot.

In vain she tried to speak, to explain her mistake, and decline his offer: her lips, quivering with emotion, refused utterance, and while her poor trembling heart rang with his words, she stood before him motionless and speechless.

"You are silent," continued the Greek. "I fear I have, by some accident, taken the place of another, and must not flatter myself with the belief your observation was intended for me. Is it not so?"

"I have indeed got separated from my friends," replied Millicent, falteringly, "and it was to them I supposed myself speaking. You will forgive my mistake!"

"Forgive? You mock me! You know it

is the thing I should most have wished for—that, to me, this is a moment more precious than years. You would not call it a mistake, if you knew how a word so cold checks the transport it has occasioned me. Do not leave me, madam—do not appear so alarmed, so distrustful. You have nothing to fear from Sidney Vavasour." And he took off his mask.

"I know, sir, there is no cause for disquietude," replied Millicent, more calmly; "but I cannot consent to prolong this meeting, nor, if I did, could it afford you any satisfaction."

"Then you repel me?—even refuse me a hearing?"

"No, sir, I have already heard you, and weighed and considered all you can urge. You have nothing to explain, I nothing to answer; and you cannot—you must not, ask me to re-open a subject so painful to us both!"

She bent gracefully, and, though with a faltering step, hastened to join Fanny and Oswald, who at this moment passed the pavilion. Before she could reach them, however, they were lost in the throng, and, after searching in vain for any of her party, she feared to look remarkable standing alone, and retreated into a grotto, where, screened from observation, she might calm and subdue her feelings.

Did he still love her? Did he still dwell fondly on her image, though associated, by the contumelious epithets of his father, with

too willing to find cause to reproach herself, though her gentle nature still urged that she might have worded her decision more kindly, and even more tenderly, and though harassed by the doubts natural to youth and inexperience, placed unexpectedly in a situation so critical, the conclusion forced upon her was that she had acted right—that she had done her duty.

But little time was allowed for these reflections, for she had scarcely entered the grotto, when she was followed by Lord Childars, who, as he approached, removed his mask.

His reappearance, strange as it may seem, was not unwelcome to her. Even in the first instance, she had been surprised rather than startled by it; for though haunted by an impression that he was not indifferent to her, as his lamentable duel with Vavasour constantly suggested, her position towards him was still very different from her

relations with Vavasour, who, while he urged a suit she could not entertain, possessed an advocate only too eloquent in her heart.

Lord Childars himself had assumed a different manner, advancing with his natural buoyant step and animated bearing, though his flushed cheek, perhaps, betrayed a momentary feeling of embarrassment. And, truth to say, this transformation was not wholly unaccountable, for he had, by accident, been an involuntary witness of Millicent's meeting with Vavasour.

it myself," returned the nobleman, " but fortunately for my honesty, the temptation of speaking to Miss Rennel was greater."

" I must feel very much flattered, I am sure. And now you must permit me to explain how it is you find me in a place like this by myself. The truth is, I ran in here for refuge, hoping I should see my friends pass in a few minutes."

" You could not be placed better for observing everything, without being observed yourself. And by the way, if you have been long in town, you must be living in a kind of hermitage always, or I should certainly have met you before."

" This is the first time I have been out, and I am only in London for a few weeks, on a visit to my friend Miss Raymond."

" Then it is probable I may not see you again," said Lord Childars, hurriedly; " and so I trust you will not think me impertinent,

Miss Rennel, if I beg permission to detain you a few minutes."

Millicent felt her colour rising, though she had not removed her mask.

" Is it not I who am detaining you?" she replied, forcing herself to speak.

" Oh, no! I would give a whole life—that is, I wish to say something to you of great importance—vital importance to me; but I fear you may, perhaps, think it not well suited to a place like this."

Millicent knew not what to think, or what to say.

" You cannot but be sensible," resumed Lord Childars, " that I have long admired, and sincerely and devotedly loved you—that your beauty and your goodness have equally charmed, dazzled, and enchanted me. But what can I tell you of feelings that are unutterable? of a love that is idolatrous—of a passion that is supreme and eternal? No!

no! not now! do not speak now, dearest, kindest Millicent. Think, consider, sweet girl. Do not violence to your own heart as well as mine, before you reflect on my proposal."

"It is one, my lord," replied Millicent, in a voice she could not command, "that few could have received with any other feeling than pleasure, but——"

"Ah! why but? If it means that you refuse me, spare the cruel sentence! Yes, leave me in doubt—torturing and distracting though it is!"

"I am pained it should be so, my lord—deeply pained, knowing you are worthy of every happiness. My own feelings towards you must ever be those of sincere respect, admiration, and esteem. Let me assure you, while I am obliged to say what is so distasteful, that I have not been insensible to the ennobling refinement of your character, or the rich gifts of your understanding. Happy

indeed should I be—happy beyond expression, could I accept your love, and give mine in return. But that I cannot do."

"And why, why not?" asked Lord Childars, passionately.

"You may think, my lord, I should tell you why, as an admission due to the truthfulness of your feelings, even if it pained and humbled my own. But though I cannot be thus explicit, there is, be assured, an insurmountable obstacle to my forming any engagement. Let the regret you may feel, then, be soothed by the reflection that our affections are often not at our own disposal, and too many are doomed to disappointment."

"Is it indeed so?" exclaimed Lord Childars, understanding her allusion. "Cruel fortune, that leaves me in the world miserable and desolate! And yet not so, Millicent, if you will be kind—considerate to yourself and me. You cannot regard me as a lover,

but you may accept me as your husband. Time and change, and my true, dutiful devotion—the deep and earnest love of a heart that lives only for you, my ever-watchful affection, my tender and assiduous care, will win your love at last. Yes, I am sure, I feel an instinctive conviction, they will ultimately triumph."

"No, my lord—believe me, they would only aggravate my unhappiness, reminding me continually how little they were deserved. Do not, then, dwell longer on a subject which wounds and distresses us both, and leaves me but one line of duty. And do not deprive me of the consolation of your friendship, of your esteem."—She extended her hand, and he seized it eagerly, but, checking himself, pressed it in silence.

Intent on their conversation, they had become abstracted from the scene around, and two masks passed in the same costume

as themselves, without incurring their notice. They were Belwood and Harriet Clinton.

"You might have got away from your mother's apron-strings before, if you had not been such a spoon," said Belwood; "and then we could have left at once, and had a good start on the road. Now we cannot even go out without being seen."

"Don't scold me, dear Charles," replied the simple girl. "I joined you as soon as ever mamma looked another way—I did, indeed, dear Charles."

"Well, don't begin to whimper. You must

going away with you, nobody else will, except poor Dud."

"Hang Dud! How can you mention that ourang-outang in the same breath with me."

"Don't be angry, Charles. I am so sorry. But you know you promised Dud should come and see us."

"And so he shall, dear—so he shall—only you mustn't bore about him. And mind, my dearest, if anything should happen to force me to part with you, I shall wait for you by the second candelabra, on the right side of the pit-door. Do you understand?"

"Oh, yes!"

"The worst of it is, no one is dressed in the same costume as you, and so you are recognised directly. But the way seems clear now: shall we try and get out, dearest?"

"Yes, pray do."

"Why, where would you go, Harriet?" asked a harsh voice, as her arm was seized by Mrs. Clinton, in the shape of an enraged

Abbess. "I have been looking for you every-where, frightened out of my life. And who is this, pray? But it does not matter, as I know there is only one person who would thus lead you astray—a needy, designing adventurer. I will take care you do not leave me again?" And before Belwood could interpose, she drew the trembling girl away.

Meanwhile, Millicent had rejoined her friends; and Lord Childars, however his heart clung to her, could not, without excit-ing remark, wholly engross her conversation

sudden press back, which excited a panic among the fair portion of the company.

"This way," said a mask to Millicent: "we can go up there, and out through the cloak-room."

The voice was Belwood's; but in her agitation, Millicent did not recognise it, thinking from the dress that he was Oswald Harper.

"But where is Fanny?" she asked. "You surely have not lost her. In any case, we must not leave her behind."

Belwood, who had taken her for Harriet, could not check an exclamation as she spoke, but he pushed on, reflecting it would now be useless to look for the heiress, and that he might at least secure Millicent. In another moment he gained the colonnade, and placed Millicent in a carriage, following himself, when the vehicle drove off, though not before Millicent, too late discovering her mistake, uttered a cry for help. In the confusion, this seemed to be unheeded, and the equi-

page was dashing down Cockspur-street when a strong hand hurled the postilion from his saddle, the horses were pulled up, and the carriage-door wrenched open.

"Rascal! what does this intrusion mean?" cried Belwood, springing at the aperture, where Lord Childars, breathless with exertion, had presented himself.

"I will tell you at the police-office," replied the nobleman, as seizing him by the throat, he flung him back in the carriage. "Miss Rennel, let me have the happiness of placing you in safety."

Instantly Millicent's hand was in his, and with a heart swelling proudly at his success, he seated her in another carriage, while Belwood, not caring to figure before a magistrate, made his escape.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A BRIDAL party was advancing up the nave of the famous church of St. George, Hanover-square: the bride was Fanny Raymond.

What emotions thrilled the young girl's heart, on presenting herself, trembling but confident, at the foot of the altar, from which a single step was to carry her into the great world—its duties, its cares—it might be, its sorrows. Purely and perfectly happy, stamped with the ennobling impress of innocence, modesty, and truth, without one apprehension of evil to come, or one faint doubt of the consort she had chosen—and,

withal, feeling the blissful pride natural to that great hour of woman's ambition, she was yet sedate, solemn. The gaiety of her nature was subdued: and though the occasion was so joyous and inspiring, she felt the burden of its responsibility.

But now the holy word was spoken; the ring of troth received; the contract completed! No longer was there a shadow on Fanny's face, no longer aught in her fluttering heart but excess of joy, rapture, fruition. With a buoyant step, and bright smile, she placed her hand on Oswald's arm, and quitted the church—a wife!

The sun shone brightly through the carriage-window, but not more brightly than happy fancies, hopes, feelings, flashed on the bride's mind. And thus let it ever be! On that day, at least—in the sweet felicity of those few rapid and glorious hours, away, far, far away, be every thought but of the present!

Right blithe and merry were the party assembled at the wedding-breakfast. All the men, as Lady Gresham denominated them, were for flirting with Millicent; but, to the inexpressible gratification of the other spinsters, she resolutely kept aloof, devoting all her attention to the bride. In this state of things, a dashing young baronet was obliged to put up with a less striking beauty; a Junior Counsel, bent on wearing a silk gown, spread forth all his attractions to a young heiress, diverting her and himself by a general quiz of the company, *sotto voce;* and more modest swains paired off as fate or accident dictated. A War-Office Colonel, more used to quil than sword; a Member of Parliament, and a Serjeant-at-law entertained the Dowagers; and busy and loud above all were the old Judge, Sir Charles Webster, and Oswald's stout old father.

"Really, dear, I must congratulate you," observed Lady Gresham to Fanny. "Every-

thing has been so delightful, and you look *so* charming—I assure you, quite Hoyle."

" *Sweet* oil, then," said the Junior Counsel to the heiress.

" Oh, Mr. Shillinglaw, fye!" was the tittering answer. " How *can* you?"

" Lady Gresham, what are you whispering to my wife?" demanded Oswald. "I must insist upon knowing, as we can now have no secrets from each other."

" Hear! hear!" cried the Member of Parliament.

" We should begin as we mean to go on," pursued Oswald.

" And for that very reason I must stand up for my privileges," said Fanny. " I believe the custom is, that it is the husband who is to have no secrets, but the wife may have as many as she pleases."

A declaration so much in unison with their feelings, naturally elicited exclamations of assent from the dowagers, who were warmly supported by all the spinsters.

" This combination of the ladies makes the question a serious one," remarked Oswald; " and it becomes necessary for me, as the pro-tem. champion of husbands, to act with firmness: so I again require you, Lady Gresham, to tell me what you were whispering."

" No, no," returned Lady Gresham. " You are quite wrong, Mr. Harper: it's not to be thought of—not at all Hoyle, I assure you."

" And, for my part, I am determined I won't tell," said Fanny—and all the ladies applauded.

" A demurrer put in," cried the Junior Counsel. " I would recommend you to take Counsel's opinion, Mrs. Harper."

" And no one is better qualified to advise you, Fanny, in so difficult a case, than my learned friend himself," said Sir Charles Webster.

" Your ludship flatters me," replied the

Junior; "but in the presence of so fair an assembly, and in a matter of such momentous importance, I cannot consent to take precedence of my learned friend the Serjeant."

"If it is to be decided by a Serjeant," cried Fanny, "it shall be a Serjeant-at-arms, and so I refer the whole question to Colonel Swan."

"And I am afraid Swan will turn out a goose," whispered the Junior to the heiress.

"He! he! you really are so witty, Mr. Shillinglaw, I cannot help laughing. How *can* you!"

"Colonel, we are all waiting anxiously for your decision," cried the young baronet, who spoke very loud, in a cracked voice, to show he was a person of distinction.

War-Office smiled — a smile grim and ghastly; for, as obedience is the first duty of a soldier, so, by analogy, he conceived subjection to be the natural position of woman.

A martinet in his office, and a strenuous advocate for flogging in the Service, in domestic life he was Nero.

"I am extremely sorry to side against Mrs. Harper," he said, "more particularly as the profession of which I have the honour to be an unworthy member" — at this point the Member of Parliament most inopportunely called out "hear! hear!" exciting a general titter—" an unworthy member," repeated War-Office, looking fiercely round—" is proverbial for deference to the ladies; but I am free to say—" and he laid great emphasis on this classic phrase of the Horse-Guards— "that I think a wife can by no means, either in law or equity, have any interest apart from her husband."

"Oh, Colonel Swan! what a decision! I never could have thought you so despotically disposed," cried Fanny, gaily, amidst a tumult of voices, which, however, were suddenly hushed by a slight scream.

"Here it is! here it is!" exclaimed the Junior, in great triumph.

"Oh! where? what is it? what can it be?" resounded on all sides.

"Miss Brightman has got it," answered the Junior.

"Oh! I am sure I have not, Mr. Shillinglaw," cried the heiress, blushing but smiling. "I do believe it is all your doing. How *can* you?"

"But what is it?" cried Sir Charles Webster, looking the picture of innocence.

"It's only the ring," returned the Junior. "Miss Brightman's piece of cake has got a ring in it, my lud."

"A ring!" exclaimed the amazed Sir Charles, while the mirth and fun became fast and furious. "A ring in the cake!"

"Yes, positively," answered the Junior, "and, I believe, the meaning of it is, that Miss Brightman, the finder thereof, is to be the next bride."

"Mr. Shillinglaw! how *can* you."

"Ha! ha! ha! Mr. Shillinglaw is quite right. It always is so!" were universal exclamations.

The heiress, though well enough pleased at the event, was not sorry that at this instant there was a general movement of the ladies to the drawing-room, by which means she escaped any further raillery.

Now came the toast, and never, even at a wedding, was one more cordially or heartily responded to. Oswald having made his acknowledgments, Junior proposed a fresh charge.

"And when," he added, "you hear my toast—when you find that it is in honour of the British Army—that profession of which the gallant Colonel has pronounced himself an unworthy member" (hear! hear! from the Member of Parliament)—"but of which I, with due deference, venture to call him a distinguished ornament, your response will

be cordial and unanimous. I will not speak of the deeds of that army on the glorious fields of Spain, or in the jungles of India: of these the gallant Colonel, who has doubtless filed many a list of killed and wounded, can tell you better than I. But allow me as an Englishman, as a patriot, as a man, allow me to mention the tunes of the Coldstream band, so fondly familiar to us all. And now with glasses brimming over, let the loyal toast go round—the British Army, immortalized by Jullien, and with which I beg to couple the name of Colonel Swan."

The Colonel, who knew as little of the British Army as of the Man in the Moon, having never even seen a parade except the guard mount, through his office-window, felt the full force of the compliment paid to him, declaring it to be the proudest moment of his life. Of Jullien he had never heard, but from his connexion with the Service, he supposed him to be Julius Cæsar.

"I assure you, gentlemen," he continued, after thus expressing himself, "I shall go forth from this scene to encounter my official duties"—and, be it remembered, the Colonel's duties were nothing less than reading the morning and evening newspapers every day — "with renewed ardour, redoubled energy. This expression of your confidence will cheer me on to great actions, and should it ever be my fortune to command the British army in the field, to meet once more the embattled legions of France, I trust we shall yet again emulate the victories of Jullien, of Marlborough, of Wellington. Yes, I do hope—I am free to say I hope that I shall not discredit the profession of which I am so unworthy a member."

At the close of this oration, the Member of Parliament gave his usual "hear, hear," and then, like another Brotherton, moved an adjournment to the drawing-room, which,

as the bride and bridegroom were soon t
depart, was readily agreed to by all.

When the reunion was complete, Fann
stole away to her dressing-room, accor
panied by Millicent.

“ Now mind you write to me, dear Mil
directly you get home,” said Fanny, “ o
shall miss your letter, as we only stay
Paris for a week till my uncle joins
Where we shall go next it is impossible
say, but it will be either Switzerland
Italy.”

“ And I shall not see you for so long, de

were uttered; and attended by the whole company, the bride and bridegroom descended to the hall. Now they were seated in the carriage; away fly the impatient horses; and Millicent feels that she is alone!

CHAPTER XIX.

FROM the wedding banquet to the bed of death, from the bridal to the tomb—it seems a wide, but is too frequently a single step:

faltering voice of the Vicar, reading the prayers for the dying. The last rite was prepared; the sacred elements administered; and now her thoughts, no longer due to mortality, must be of that bourne whence no traveller returns.

But still her glance wandered sadly to the door, with an expression of earnest and sorrowing expectation. At every movement among those around, she raised her eyes, and then, not meeting the face she had hoped for, dropped them in anguish. The thought of what she must leave undone in life distracted her in death.

"It is impossible to understand what she wishes," observed the surgeon to the Vicar, "yet she has evidently something on her mind, which she is very desirous to communicate."

"And, I suppose, we must not hope that she will have her voice again?" replied Mr. Alderson, anxiously.

"No. I am only surprised she still lives. Do you know if she has settled her affairs?"

"From what the housekeeper says, I fear she has not. It was only yesterday morning, it seems, that she wrote to her solicitor, Mr. Scholefield, requesting him to come and make her will, as if she had a foreboding of some calamity. Indeed, I had recommended her to be prepared for events, though thinking she might live for years."

"And so she might, only for the rupture of this blood-vessel. But Scholefield ought to have been sent for at once."

"I did send by express, directly you informed me of her danger, but my messenger has not returned, and I suppose not finding Scholefield at home, he has followed him to the Assizes."

"Well, it is now too late, for she is sinking fast. I wish Miss Rennel were here."

"Hush!—yes, here she comes!"

It was the sound of carriage-wheels; and

so profound, so perfect was the silence, that it was heard even by the dying woman. Again her eye turned with feeble light on the door; a hasty step was heard; and Millicent, pale, breathless, speechless, darted in.

Harrowing it was to see such wild grief stamped on features so beautiful—wondrous that it could be kept down, as it assuredly was, in the secret depths of the heart, except for that overflowing and involuntary reflection. She was calm, too; though it was the calmness of despair.

"My dear, dearest mamma," she said, bending over the pillow; "will you not speak to me, dear mamma? Shall I never hear your loving voice again?"

A gleam of animation passed over Mrs. Grantley's face, like the flash of expiring embers, when her eye glassed over once more.

Millicent did not speak, but she remained

at the bedside, with her arm supporting the sufferer's head, an image of grief and hopelessness.

" I fear from her look, she is in great pain said the surgeon, after a few minutes, " an yet I can scarcely believe it. Will you as her, Miss Rennel?"

" Do you suffer much, dearest mamma inquired Millicent, softly.

Mrs. Grantley made a negative motio with her head.

" There is something you wish to hav done, then?" pursued Millicent.

mamma," said Millicent, tenderly. "It will so grieve—so pain me, if you do. Let all our thoughts now be given to God, dear mamma—the God I should never have heard of but for you."

"I can see she will not be satisfied, Miss Rennel, unless her wishes are complied with," observed the surgeon. "Perhaps now you are here, we may contrive to understand her, and if you write down the result, we will have it properly attested. But there is not a moment to lose."

"And is not that a reason why we should not disturb the poor lady, whose every thought, as Miss Rennel herself has observed, should now be devoted to God?" said the Vicar.

"I should say not, sir. The object is to secure a provision for this young lady," returned the surgeon.

Before Mr. Alderson could reply, the door opened, and there was a general stir, an-

nouncing the arrival of the anxiously-ex-
pected lawyer.

"Scholefield, I am afraid you are to
late," said the surgeon, "but, for Heaven
sake, lose no time."

"Only tell me if she is still sensible," an-
swered the lawyer, hurriedly.

"Perfectly so," returned the surgeon
"but she is speechless."

Scholefield, without making a repl
stepped up to the bed, presenting himself t
Mrs. Grantley, who, though for the last fe

by an affirmative motion of the head, whether I have understood your instructions rightly."

Mrs. Grantley made the sign.

"I call all here to witness that this is the testator's own act and deed," said Schole-field. "Now, madam, you have only to affix your signature, and the will is complete."

The pen was placed in her hand, already cold and powerless, but only too willing to sign, and her glazed eye, with a last effort, turned intently on the open parchment. But there was no speculation, no meaning, no life in her look. Mrs. Grantley was dead!

CHAPTER XX.

It was midnight. The wind swept round the house in low and mournful gusts, piercing every crevice, and sighing down the long passages like the lament of a troubled spirit. And in one chamber lay the fragile form a spirit had so lately tenanted, now for ever still, cold, lifeless.

Millicent entered, screening with her hand the flickering taper, which, throwing all its light on her face, showed her pale as ashes. With noiseless step, she advanced hurriedly for a few paces, and then suddenly stopped.

Before her, covered with an ample sheet,

marked too plainly with the dread outlines, was all that remained of the dear and honoured being to whom she gave more than a child's love. Never again should those gentle eyes shed their mild beams on her—those lips bless, those hands caress her. And how strange that her deep sorrow, dictated by the purest affection, should be tinctured with fear, as, removing the sheet, she looked on the white face of the corpse.

Inscrutable, solemn, terrible mystery! to be contemplated only with timid and half-averted glances, even by eyes bedewed with tears! Perhaps it is, that among those to whom the presence of death is not familiar, there is an apprehension that the disembodied soul still lingers nigh, invisible but observant, and nature shrinks from fellowship so awful. But whatever it may be, there is certainly a shadow, a dark terror, wrapped like a pall round the dead, which makes itself felt in the boldest heart. Such

was the feeling that involuntarily overcame Millicent's!

Conquering reluctance, she bent over the corpse, and pressed her lips on its marble forehead. The cold, stagnant flesh no longer yielded to her kiss, and she drew back, with a renewed outburst of grief.

Fondly did she recal, with a diligence never to be wearied, all the maternal tenderness, the loving expressions, and the immense obligations, conferred upon her so lavishly by her departed friend, even dwelling gratefully on her last generous intention, unfinished and frustrated though it was, and scarcely suffering herself to give a thought to her own situation, and the cheerless prospect before her. And yet she could not entirely repel the reflection that she was now houseless, friendless, penniless. It intruded itself frequently, like the suggestion of an evil genius, giving gloomy prominence to her reverse of fortune, and suggesting despair. But a store

of resolute, self-relying qualities, sunk like a rich mine in the secret recesses of her heart, nerved and emboldened her. She was prepared willingly to renew the arduous struggles of existence ; and already saw the exertions she was determined to make, in accordance with schemes long dreamt of, crowned with success—as if mere merit could ever be a victor without a mighty contest!

It was long before she dragged herself away, and retiring to her own room, went to bed. Even then her thoughts remained in the chamber of death, hovering round that inanimate but loved form, and it was not till morning peeped smiling through the lattice, like a promise of good, that she fell asleep.

She arose, refreshed, but still, as she must long be, overwhelmed by her bereavement. Her gentle and affectionate spirit, prostrate, crushed, writhed under the same agonising thoughts, the same inconsolable sorrow, and

for hours she sat perfectly motionless, u
mindful and forgetful of everything arou
At length her reverie was interrupted by
visit from Mr. Alderson.

The Vicar, under a coldness of mann
very repelling, had, when interested, a co
siderable share of good feeling, and it w
with an unusual degree of kindness and ge
tleness that he now condoled with Millice
opportunely reminding her of the comfort
assurances of religion, never more soothi
than in such moments, when, indeed, in

"When he does come," resumed the Vicar, "I shall inform him what were his sister's intentions respecting you, and though intentions go for nothing in law, I have no doubt that, as a man of honour and probity, he will so far attend to Mrs. Grantley's wishes, as to make a handsome settlement upon you."

"Oh, pray do not speak of such a thing to him," replied Millicent, quickly. "I do not wish it— from *him*, I could not accept it."

"You know him then?"

"I have seen him once."

"And your impressions of him, I suppose, are not of an agreeable kind?"

"I have no right to complain of him. As Mrs. Grantley's brother he must always command my respect, but there are circumstances too painful to mention now, which would prevent my accepting any favour from him, particularly such a one as you propose."

"But morally speaking, my dear young lady, it is your right, though one that can-

not be enforced. To abandon or repudiate it, for the sake of a false punctilio, would, in your situation, be little short of insanity. I speak in this strong manner, because I am afraid, from the disposition you manifest, you are blinding yourself to the necessities of your position, which, let me remind you, are very serious."—Mr. Alderson prided himself on telling disagreeable truths bluntly, which he called being sincere.

"Be assured, sir," replied Millicent, moved at his roughness, "I am not insensible of my sad position; but it is no more than I am ready to meet. The education I have received will enable me, by diligence and attention, to earn a respectable livelihood; and I hope soon to procure a situation, which will place me, at least, above want."

"I am glad to hear you say so," returned Mr. Alderson, more kindly—for he thought she evinced a laudable desire not to overstep

her station. "So long as your independence proceeds from a right principle, and not from a foolish feeling of pride, I can admire and applaud it; and, believe me, I shall have great pleasure in furthering your views, if it should be in my power. Still a provision to fall back upon, in case of disaster, is no hindrance; and, therefore, I must insist on naming the matter to Sir Hildred."

"Should you do so, you will oblige me to disclaim having any part in it," said Millicent.

"Oh! leave all that to me," answered Mr. Alderson. "I presume, you will remain here till after the funeral?"

"Yes, if I am permitted. It would be a satisfaction to me to see the——" but the thought of that melancholy and dreaded moment, when the remains of her generous protectress must be consigned to the tomb, checked her utterance.

"Of course, no one will interfere with

you," said Mr. Alderson. "But Sir Hildred will be here to-morrow, and then everything can be settled."

The morrow came, however, without bringing Sir Hildred, and as the matter was too urgent for delay, Mr. Alderson despatched a second express, informing him that the day was fixed for the funeral, and inquiring if he would attend it. Still there was no answer, although the messenger, to prevent mistakes, delivered the letter to Sir Hildred himself, and requested instructions.

On the evening before the day so long dreaded, yet so speedily reached, Millicent, for the first time since Mrs. Grantley's death, went out for a walk. As the moment was fast approaching when she must quit Winstone for ever, the thought occurred to her that she should pay one more visit to the village, cross the footpath over the meadow, which she had so often traversed with Mrs.

Grantley, and look again over the little common beyond—scenes become familiar, memorable, dear. At every step rose some fond remembrance, some cherished and soothing association. At one spot Mrs. Grantley had always paused in their walks, to admire the fine extent of prospect, here abounding with picturesque effects; another was consecrated by a happy incident, an endearing word, a sweet interchange of thought. Then, peering through umbrageous trees, rose the spire of the village church, where she had first heard the glad tidings of Revelation, first declared herself a servant and disciple of the Cross. And now, opening the avenue-gate, she came into a green lane, running past the detached and straggling cottages that constituted the village.

How tranquil, how composing was the picture, with the sun shedding its last rays on the humble windows in a blaze of glory! and yet she who had been a blessing to every

hearth, the minister of kindness, hope, charity to all—the friend and protectress of the poor, the comforter of the afflicted, was now only a heap of dust! Well might the Preacher exclaim "all is vanity."

The meadow was reached; and she lingered on the loved and pleasant footpath, with the fresh, balmy air fanning her pale cheek, and making tears tremble in her eyes. How sad, how bitter was the reflection that she was there for the last time—that henceforward she could visit it only in her dreams! Every object around, even to the low stile where she had often loitered to rest, claimed a fond and protracted glance, as if they were not impressed too deeply on her memory, her heart, her feelings, too inseparably associated with moments of happiness, ever to be forgotten!

Full of these impressions, Millicent returned home, but little refreshed by her walk. A post-chaise was at the door, and

meeting no one in the hall, she proceeded, in a fever of expectation, to the housekeeper's room, to inquire if the arrival was Sir Hildred.

The housekeeper, Mrs. Reeve, the only servant who had not envied her elevation, now, in adversity, treated her with more than usual deference. So true it is, that it is the humbler orders of society, with their rugged and untaught feelings, that lend misfortune the readiest sympathy.

"Ah, Miss Milly, I were so glad you went for a little ramble," said the old dame, "and you do look all the better for it, my dear lady. It's no use mopin', and that, when it's past and gone, you know; and, as the Vicar says, we must all go when our time comes. So do sit down, Miss Millly, and I'll get you a nice cup of tea, and make yourself a little comfortable—if it's only for *her* sake, as what she'd like." —And the good woman wiped the corner of her eye.

"Thank you, Mrs. Reeve, but I would rather not have anything just now," replied Millicent. "I saw a carriage at the door, and I thought perhaps Sir Hildred Vavasour had arrived."

"Oh! no, miss. It be a gentleman as has come with the Vicar, and they be gone round the house together. But, bless me! here they come again. What *can* they be after?"

As she spoke, Mr. Alderson entered, accompanied by a short, spare man, with a complexion like parchment, and a dull lead eye, which flew round the room like a bullet.

"Ah, Miss Rennel, I was just wishing you had come home," said Mr. Alderson. "Miss Rennel is the young lady I was speaking of, Mr. Graves—Miss Rennel."

The lead eye sank to Millicent's heart.

"Mr. Graves is Sir Hildred's solicitor, Miss Rennel," continued Mr. Alderson, "and has come to seal up all the effects. Sir

Hildred will not be here himself till after the funeral: at least, I understood you so, sir?"

"You are quite right, sir," answered Mr. Graves. "Sir Hildred thinks he should do wrong in attending the funeral, as it seems the deceased lady, during the greater part of her life, was in constant enmity with him."

This did not strike Mr. Alderson as a very sound reason for perpetuating enmity longer, even in the grave; but Sir Hildred, besides being very rich, possessed the presentation to numerous rich benefices, and Mr. Alderson resisted the temptation of texts and precepts, turning the conversation on other subjects.

"I may assure Miss Rennel, sir, I presume, that nothing belonging to her will be interfered with?" he said.

"Certainly," replied Graves. "Under the circumstances you mention, such articles as are actually hers will be left out of the schedule, but as everything else must be

inventoried, I hope Miss Rennel will put a
her things together, in order to prevent an
confusion."

Millicent promised to do so; and retiri
to her own chamber, accomplished that o
ject, being then ready to quit the house at
moment's notice.

CHAPTER XXI.

A DRIZZLING rain was falling, when the remains of Mrs. Grantley were placed in the hearse. The few persons invited by Mr. Alderson to attend, from among the neighbouring gentry, occupied only a single coach; but a train of private carriages followed, showing the high respect and esteem in which the deceased lady was held by numerous others.

On reaching the road, the mournful cortége was joined by the tenants, and such of the village population, of either sex, as were not at their daily labour. The school-children

And one there was, in an ob
of the little gallery, screened fro
curtain, who overlooked all. No
her enter, and consequently her p
unsuspected; but who there coul
the lost friend as she could?
join in the service, but both voic
paralysed by grief, and possesse
the one terrible idea, refused.
caught faintly the sublime wo
funeral Psalm, read by Mr. Alde
and solemn tones—

"*Lord, let me know mine e
number of my days: that I may
how long I have to live*

"*And now, Lord, what is my hope? truly my hope is even in thee!*"

At length the door of the vault was opened, and the corpse was borne, amidst breathless silence, to its last resting-place. Millicent could watch no longer, and burying her face in her hands, she wept unrestrained.

It was some time before she looked up. Then, glancing round, she perceived that the church was empty, and she hurried down to the nave, hoping to get out unobserved by Mr. Alderson. But, on reaching it, she found the door locked.

Could it be that Mr. Alderson and the clerk had left the church? She flew to the vestry, and her fears were confirmed. It was closed.

The prospect of remaining all night in the church, after a scene so harrowing to her feelings, for a moment confounded her; but endued with strong natural courage, developed by the bitter and cruel experiences

of her sad childhood, she quickly rallied, repelling the superstitious terrors which the growing shades of evening gathered thickly around. In vain, however, she knocked against the massive panels of the door, hoping to attract the attention of any chance loiterer; in vain, paced the gloomy aisles, measuring, with eager eye, the mullioned panes of the old Gothic windows: night and darkness came on, and she abandoned all hope of escape.

She sat down on the steps of the Co[illegible] munion, as if no evil or malignant influe[illegible] ... approach so hallow[illegible]

their gilded wings extended above, till, in a nervous panic, she looked up trembling, almost expecting to behold their colossal figures. Then her shrinking eye, restless as her fears, glanced timidly at the pulpit, which loomed through deep shadows in dim and imperfect outline—like some allegory of ancient Egypt, shrouded in the mists of time. And, by-and-by, the iron voice of the old clock told twelve.

Twelve! the last stroke, heightened by silence, vibrated through arch and aisle with terrific distinctness, awakening an echo in every quarter. At the same moment a gleam of moonlight, dimmed by the richly-coloured panes, peered faintly through the chancel-window, marking the wall with a mystic streak, which, as it spread further, disclosed the effigy of a knight of old, standing up erect, in his marble shroud, to watch over bones crumbling into dust. Then it rose to the scroll overhead, which recorded his deeds

and virtues, traced by a surer hand, and in characters far different, on the imperishable tablets of the Angel of Life. And thence the moonbeam crept on to an old cross, and there it seemed to rest.

Its successive revelations, to which the time and place gave wilder significance, raised a host of dismal thoughts in Millicent's mind. Imagination, feeling, the thronging suggestions of early impressions, coloured every idea with mystery and gloom; and with all her enlarged judgment, her innate and acquired resolution, it was long before she could bring herself to repel their depressing influence.

But as night wore on her courage revived. Faith, confidence in the presence and mercy of Providence, early habits of self-possession and self-control, reassured and inspired her; and, at last, she slept as calmly on those cold steps as on a bed of down.

Light streaming over the Communion broke

her slumbers; and rising, she offered up her morning devotions, with a thankful though sorrowful heart, but not doubting that, great as might be the trials and struggles she was about to encounter, the beneficent Power by which she had hitherto been upheld, in the darkest hours, would still watch, compassionate, and protect her. Such was the assurance with which she prepared to engage in the great business and battle of life!

After a time, passing through the transept, she heard a key inserted in the door, and slipping behind a column, perceived the clerk enter, and cross over to the vestry. As she did not wish to be observed, she waited till he was out of sight, and then glided forth.

The sun poured his brightest radiance on the churchyard; but the yews and cypresses, those undying mourners, still wore the same deep gloom, and the pearly dew hung on the graves like tears. Millicent hurried on. Soon she reached the lodge, passed up the avenue,

opened the hall-door, and ascending the stairs, gained her own room, without meeting any of the household. Nor had her absence for the whole night been observed—a sad proof of the great change in her fortune.

No long time elapsed, when hearing carriage-wheels, Millicent looked out and saw the tall form of Sir Hildred alight at the door. She might now expect every moment to be summoned to his presence; and despite her independence of him, despite her resolution to decline any assistance he might offer, she felt a sickening sensation of dread. His terrible pride, his bitter contumely, and his coarse unprovoked insults, unrestrained by any consideration of delicacy or feeling, had deeply wounded her before, when supported by the love and sympathy of Mrs. Grantley; and what must be their effect now? She trembled to think, but needlessly; for hers was not a nature, when put to the test, to be crushed by a frown.

Her reflections were interrupted by a message from Mr. Alderson, requesting her attendance in the library. There, as she had expected, she found both the Vicar and Sir Hildred.

"I have been making a representation in your behalf to Sir Hildred Vavasour, Miss Rennel," said Mr. Alderson, in his most benign manner, as she approached; "I am happy to tell you he is disposed to act towards you in the handsomest way. Considering all the circumstances, he empowers me to offer you a settlement of a hundred pounds a year, for life, provided you comply with certain conditions he will mention, and which appear to me perfectly unobjectionable."

"In short," said Sir Hildred, imperiously, "I shall require you, in return for this annuity, to enter into a solemn agreement never to hold any correspondence with my son; and as the best means of avoiding such a thing, to proceed immediately to America,

all the expenses of your outfit and passa
being paid by me."

"I can have no hesitation, sir, in promisi
to refrain from all correspondence with M
Vavasour," replied Millicent, colour
deeply; "but I must decline to accede
your proposal that I should go to Ameri
Nor can I accept the annuity you are so go
as to offer me, but which I must still tha
you for."

Sir Hildred looked at her in amazeme
his lips tightly compressed, and his bro
pursed by a frown.

warmly; "and since you have resolved to act so independently, I shall not be able to render you any further assistance."

"Let me add," said Sir Hildred, without raising his eyes, "that I shall expect to hear you have left my house within an hour."

Millicent bent coldly, and quitted the room.

Before the time named, she had reached the railway, and was on the road to London.

END OF VOL. II.

THE

DAUGHTER OF NIGHT:

A

STORY OF THE PRESENT TIME.

BY S. W. FULLOM.

> Can such things be,
> And overcome us, like a summer cloud,
> Without our special wonder?
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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1851.

WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.

THE

DAUGHTER OF NIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

HAIL to the mighty metropolis! which lovers of sounding but empty metaphor call the great Babel, the modern Nineveh, and a dozen other outrageous and outlandish appellations. But let it still be London—the city without a peer, without a rival; and, surely, no name under the sun is so great, so grand, so famous!

What a vast drama is every moment acting

under the endless expanse of peering, frater-nised roofs, spread out like one unbroken mass! Where is the Asmodeus who could raise them up, and tell us their myriad, myriad strange and startling mysteries? The palace, the mansion, the mart, the hovel—the very nooks of the cellars—the very ground beneath us—every spot and place, on every side, in every quarter, has its own deep, indelible, eternal memories, its own separate tale, almost its own world!

Grand it is, and inspiring and spirit-stirring, too, to see the overflowing tide in the streets, as if all mankind had held a congress, and were parting different ways. The lord and the beggar, Dives and Lazarus, the fine lady and the slut, scarcely distinguishable from each other, here walk in the same rank, as they will on the Day of Judgment. All crowd to the commercial Jerusalem, where the tribes that come up to worship are

nations—their god Mammon, their temple the Exchange.

On Millicent's arrival in the great capital, it was not without considerable difficulty that after wandering about for some time she procured a lodging—as humble in appearance as was consistent with any pretension to respectability, but for which she was to pay the now important sum of twelve shillings weekly. This stipulation was agreed to at the street-door, in a conference with the landlady, Mrs. Grimshaw, a personage who, though now reduced to letting lodgings, had, by her own account, seen better days, and certainly, if one judged from her meagre and withered appearance, could scarcely ever have seen worse. As a mournful memento of the imagined period of prosperity, she wore on one side of her cap a faded black feather, in fine keeping with her soiled complexion, and which it was her custom to don,

at a moment's notice, whenever she answered applicants for lodgings, or whenever occasion took her to the lodgers' rooms.

The terms of occupancy settled, Millicent was installed in a small back room, three flights up stairs, and there left to her reflections.

She had already ruminated sufficiently on her affairs, and settled in her mind how she should act. Her first step was to write to Fanny, who she had no doubt would soon procure her a suitable situation; but she did not remember, in the rapid succession of events, that the week fixed for Fanny's stay at Paris had expired, and therefore, that the letter was not likely to reach her. Not to depend solely on this, however, she resolved to insert an advertisement in the *Times*, tendering her services as governess for a moderate stipend, to any respectable family, and she further determined to accept the first

engagement that offered. Indeed, she had no resource, as, during her recent visit to Fanny, she had been rather lavish of her quarter's allowance ; and now, after paying travelling expenses, she found that her whole stock was three pounds and some silver, with which she was again to begin the world !

With these crippled resources, she was naturally much alarmed by the entrance of a dirty servant, bearing two wax tapers, in plated candlesticks, when a mere rushlight, which would equally answer her wants, was more than she could afford. To increase her consternation, these were followed by a tray of tea-things, among which figured, on a plate by no means over-clean, a shaving of tongue, surpassing in thinness the greatest triumphs of Vauxhall.

"If you please, ma'am," said the servant, in explanation of the last inroad, "missis's

compliments, and she thought as you'd be faint, arter bein' on the rail, and so she's sent you a cup o' tea, and a nice little bit o' tongue, ma'am—if you please."

It was in vain that Millicent declined this intrusive hospitality: the servant insisted on leaving the tray; and, not to appear churlish, Millicent, overcoming repugnance, at length forced herself to swallow some tea, which, if at all entitled to that name, was of the most execrable description. After a time she became more herself, and even mustered sufficient moral courage to extinguish one of the tapers. At last, worn in body and mind, miserably depressed and heart-sick, she sought her pillow, and as night wore on, fell into a troubled sleep.

Next morning she arose early, intending to go out while the streets were comparatively vacant, and purchase the humble necessaries

to which she must restrict her diet. But Mrs. Grimshaw, grown grey in the uses of extortion, was too old a bird to be caught napping. Hearing Millicent astir, she was up in a moment, and soon the dirty servant reappeared, freighted with a breakfast tray.

"If you please, ma'am, missis's compliments, and she thought as you'd feel faint, arter bein' up so early, and so she's sent you some breakfus."

And there, to be sure, it was—a pot of chicory-water, nicknamed coffee, with bread and butter on a reduced scale, and the smallest imaginable slice of bacon, usurping the identical plate that had last night served for the tongue. Millicent surveyed the well-spread board with anything but satisfaction.

"I am exceedingly sorry that Mrs. Grimshaw should give herself so much trouble," she said. "I will take a cup of coffee, since

it has been brought up; but I beg you will tell her not to send anything up again, as I will give directions for whatever I want."

This rebuke, rendered more forcible by the firm and decided tone in which it was uttered, elicited another message.

"If you please, ma'am, missis's compliments, and she says as she's ordered in your dinner last night, and she can't have it left on her hands, ma'am, if you please."

"Then, she must make out a bill, stating how much I owe her," replied Millicent

"Has Mrs. Grimshaw sent up the bill?" asked Millicent.

"No, ma'am, she ain't made it out yet."

"Then I beg she will do so directly, and let me have it, as I wish to be out of her debt."

A short interval succeeded, when the door opened, admitting Mrs. Grimshaw herself, plumed with the ostrich. She flounced forward with a portentous frown, the feather waving defiantly.

"I understand you wants your little bill, ma'am," she said, wiping some ideal dust from the table with a corner of her apron. "It's rayther soon to ask for a bill—rayther, as you've only been a few hours in the house. But you may have your reasons, ma'am—I can't deny, and so I'm willin' to give it."

With a dogged look, intending to announce that she was prepared to fight for her charges

if occasion required, she handed Millicent the important document; and here it is:—

MRS. GRIMSHAW'S BILL.

THREE-PAIR BACK—TO MRS. GRIMSHAW.

	£	s.	d.
To tea	0	3	6
Tongue to ditto. . . .	0	1	0
Two wax candles	0	1	6
Breakfast	0	3	6
Bacon to ditto	0	1	0
Dinner	0	3	6
Burton ale to ditto. . . .	0	1	6
Pint of sherry to ditto . .	0	3	6
Paper for bill.	0	0	1
Total. . . .	£0	19	1

"If you gives me a sovereign, ma'am, I can give you elevenpence, and that will set us just right," observed Mrs. Grimshaw, sternly, perceiving signs of discontent on Millicent's brow.

"I will not discharge the bill in its present shape," replied Millicent. "You have chosen to provide these things for me on

our own responsibility, and though I will
ay this time for such as I make use of, I
annot incur expenses solely for your accom-
iodation."—She drew a pencil over the
ems of wine and ale, adding—"Before I
ay the bill, you must make these deduc-
ons."

"Indeed, ma'am, I shall do no such
ing," answered the indignant Mrs. Grim-
aw. "I got the articles for you, and you
ust pay for 'em, whether you drinks 'em or
. I don't keep a coffee-shop, ma'am, and
ain't used to coffee-shop lodgers. I've been
customed to a different sort of life"—in a
himpering tone—"when I was well to do
the world, and had a good husband to
otect me, ma'am; but from the time I first
pt lodgings, I never had such a thing as
is happen; and I won't put up with it—
ough I *am* a poor, lone widow."

The maudlin insinuation with which she

concluded, and which the application of her black apron to her eyes converted into an appeal, had more effect upon Millicent than all her bravado.

"I should be very sorry to distress you," she said, "and therefore I will not press for the deductions; but I assure you, these things are of no use to me, and I am very poor myself."

Mrs. Grimshaw did not reply immediately, but snatched up the sovereign, and flung out of the door, muttering as she disappeared

time, and spare no effort, to procure employment; and having written an advertisement, she set out for the office of the *Times*, which, though knowing nothing of town herself, she learnt from the imprint of an old newspaper was in Printing-House Square.

What an instantaneous change from the stir, the bustle, the overwhelming and ever-rolling concourse of the street, to that quiet, secluded quadrangle! It stands in the thronged, panting, dense neighbourhood like a breathing place—a spot forgotten, as if the March of Intellect had swept by, and left it a century behind. Who could think, that those dull walls enclose the great motive power, the spirit, the voice of the Age?—that buildings so humble are the Palace of the Press? Who could imagine that it is from some closet within, probably never reached by the light of day, that the invisible Thunderer hurls his bolts at the giant anta-

office, which, like one of the supple
crammed with advertisers. A
births, deaths, and marriages had
clerks, to the great annoyance of
agent, impatient to dispose of a
eligible cottage, with twelve bed
the Isle of Wight. A clever cob,
a cut-away-coat, corduroy smalls
boots, had reined up with a Broug
if a comparison may be admitted,
looked quite as beauish as the Ex-C
Behind came the mysterious M. R.
been requested, in the paper of th
ing day to communicate with L

the throng, stood the dashing young gentleman who "wanted to borrow." The rosy housemaid was in the same rank with the pale and spectral governess—the portly butler discussed a point with some "sherry in bond;" a New York steamer was speaking, in a lower key than that of a trumpet, an emigrant ship to New Zealand—all jumbled, like a lottery, in that universal registry-office, whose faithful broadsheet would soon bear their tenders to the uttermost corners of the earth.

Millicent feared that, in such an array of manifestoes, her little advertisement would be overlooked, but on the third morning after, she was agreeably surprised, on calling at the library where she had arranged for letters to be addressed, to find a note awaiting her, directed in an Italian hand for A. B., and bearing a seal that announced by its dimensions, rank and consequence in the writer.

CHAPTER II.

Anxious as Millicent was, she did not open the note till she reached her own room, when it was found to contain these words:

"A. B. is requested to call at ——, Tavistock Square, on Saturday morning, at eleven o'clock."

Saturday morning! there were still two days to intervene, and days—nay, hours, had become of serious importance. With all her frugality and self-denial, the continued extortion of Mrs. Grimshaw had sadly diminished her purse; and what she had hoped, with

proper economy, to render sufficient for a month, now seemed as if it would barely cover the week. But the prospect of obtaining a situation revived her drooping courage, and she endeavoured to wait patiently for the event.

Saturday morning came at last. It was full half an hour before the time appointed, when she entered the Square, after loitering nearly an hour in an adjacent street; and then, with timid and hurried step, she ventured to pass the house. What a strange interest did it possess for her! how closely, how inextricably, it might be associated with her future life!

A few minutes before eleven she gave a modest knock at the door, which brought up a footman, who, impressed by her superior manners and appearance, and perhaps touched by her deep mourning, listened respectfully

to her explanation, and then ushered her into the presence of his mistress.

Lady Emily Plew—for such was the name of the mistress of the house—was the fifth daughter of a very poor Duke, married to a very rich merchant, of whom, despite his wealth, she was most thoroughly and heartily ashamed. From the moment that, impelled by vaulting ambition, and attracted by Lady Emily's alluring and syren-like glances, he committed himself to what were indeed, in his case, the bonds of matrimony, Mr. Plew had been constantly made to feel this distasteful truth. In the eyes of his fine-lady wife, everything that he did, said, or thought was radically and irreclaimably vulgar. Nay, he himself, his calling, his origin, his very name—(O Shakspeare!)—were, to her, types and impersonations of vulgarity. She and his daughters, two buds of promise, of the

ripe years of twelve and ten, and whom he regarded as vast and perfect chrysolites, in vain endeavoured, by every device their ingenuity could suggest, to reduce him to something presentable. Try as they might, and as *he* might—for he backed them manfully, his ignoble nature would peep out, and lead him on every possible occasion into numberless mistakes. Thus he lived in perpetual constraint—a plague to himself, a bore to his wife, and a butt for his children.

Such were the charming family assembled in the drawing-room, when Millicent was ushered in.

"Oh! A. B.!" exclaimed Lady Emily, looking up from a newspaper, as Millicent appeared. "But have you come in black, A. B.? I was not aware that people went to look for situations in mourning."

Millicent was unable to reply: the rude

allusion to her bereavement aroused feelings too deep for expression.

"Probably she is in mourning for her mother, Lady Emily," suggested Mr. Plew, in a low voice.

"Mr. Plew! I am astonished that you will always interfere with me in this way," answered Lady Emily, aloud. "Pray, will you allow me to speak to A. B., here, or must we go into another room?"

"How dreadful it is of you, papa, to teaze mamma so," observed the elder chrysolite.

"Oh! papa does get so vulgar," remarked chrysolite the second.

Mr. Plew would fain have defended himself, but a glance from Lady Emily forbade; and, quailing like a sparrow under that hawk-like eye, he took refuge in the newspaper.

"I don't allow black in the house, A. B.," resumed Lady Emily; "it's disagreeable.

Your mother, I am sure, would not wish you to wear black for her, if she knew it stood in the way of your obtaining a situation."

"I will relinquish it at once, madam, rather than it should be an obstacle to your engaging me," said Millicent.

"But I—I—that is, do you wear a watch, A. B.?" asked Lady Emily, as if she doubted the evidence of her senses.

"Yes, madam, it was a gift from the lady I am in mourning for."

"Your last mistress! Upon my word! I think she might have given you something more suitable to your station, if it was necessary to make you a present. A watch indeed! But I cannot allow any one here to wear watches, A. B., except the family."

"I have no wish to wear it then, madam, and will put it by immediately."

"Dear me what an extraordinary, what

an astounding thing!" exclaimed Mr. Plew, suddenly throwing down the newspaper, and starting from his chair.

"Mr. Plew!" almost shrieked Lady Emily.

"Papa!" cried the two chrysolites.

"That *that* man—that Mandeville Harley, above every one," cried Mr. Plew, in an ungovernable fit of excitement, "should do such a thing—that *he* should break!"

"Break!"—from Lady Emily, echoed by the chrysolites.

"Yes, he's knocked up, failed, ruined," pursued Plew, "and all through the Austrian loan. I thought he'd over-speculate some day, but—to break! Mandeville Harley to break!"

"Mr. Plew, this is scandalous," cried Lady Emily. "You really have no feeling, no consideration, to shock me in such a heartless way, when you knew I was engaged to the

Harley's rout to-morrow. You have upset my nerves for a week. There, do not say any more, I beg."

Mr. Plew, stunned by the rebuke, turned for succour to the chrysolites, but though not prepared with any remark, they shared their mother's indignation, and looked daggers. He had no resource, therefore, but to plunge again into the newspaper.

Meanwhile, Lady Emily, after being in agonies for a minute, revived, a vinaigrette having restored the tone of her sensitive nerves.

"You have not told me, A. B., how long you were in your last place," she said. "I hope it was a considerable period, as it says very little for people, in my opinion, when they cannot produce a character of several years."

"I have never been engaged as a governess before, madam," replied Millicent; "but I

trust I shall not be less efficient on that account. Sir Charles Webster, the gentleman to whom I must refer you for any inquiries you may wish to make about me, has known me nearly three years. The lady I resided with is dead."

"And pray in what capacity were you employed by her, since you were not a governess?"

"None, madam. Mrs. Grantley had adopted me, and I lived with her as her daughter."

A smirk of derision stole over Lady Emily's face. "I see, A. B., it is quite unnecessary to pursue our conversation any further," she observed. "To a person who dresses in mourning, who wears a gold watch, who has never been in a situation before, who is a friend of Sir Charles Webster, and who has been brought up a lady, though without the means of supporting herself, the humble situation I can offer must be perfectly out of

the question. So I wish you good morning, A. B." And Lady Emily rang the bell.

Millicent turned one plaintive look on the haughty and heartless woman; and then, seeing appeal would be useless—with her heart and bosom swelling painfully, left the room. Before she could close the door behind, Lady Emily burst into a loud laugh, to which the chrysolites lent their angel voices, ably seconded by Plew, who, however, instead of ingratiating himself by this proceeding, only got snubbed for his pains.

CHAPTER III.

On gaining the street, Millicent walked on with rapid steps, without heeding or caring whither she went. The hope she had so dearly, so fondly cherished, through so many hours of agonising suspense, and on which her very existence seemed to depend, had failed. What resource was left to her? and where could she turn for succour? But a few shillings remained in her purse, which she had vainly sought to husband so frugally, denying herself, during the last two days, what were almost necessaries of life! In

two days more, a week's rent would be due, and well might she anticipate that no forbearance would be extended to her by Mrs. Grimshaw. But in the interim—such are the straws hope clutches at!—a letter might arrive from Fanny. Ah, Fanny! could she thus forget her friend?

Lodging-housekeepers have a strange faculty of acquiring, by some means unknown, a pretty clear insight into the finances and position of their lodgers. Had Millicent possessed any experience, the gradually thickening clouds on Mrs. Grimshaw's brow, at no time particularly radiant, would have apprised her that her insolvency was suspected. Even as it was, they aggravated her discomfort, and caused her to look to the rapidly approaching rent-day with increased dread.

Sleepless and wretched was the night preceding, but how unwelcome the dawn!

Still pondering what she should do, she suddenly remembered having, in her walk through the town, observed an announcement on a shop-door that money was lent within, and it struck her that she might be able to obtain a small loan, by representing to the proprietor how she was situated. In any case, he might be disposed to purchase her watch and trinkets, no longer an essential part of her dress; and sad as it was to lose such souvenirs of Mrs. Grantley, the thought that they afforded a resource, in this hour of stern necessity, cheered and reassured her.

Her reflections were interrupted, as she finished a scanty breakfast, by the appearance of Mrs. Grimshaw, who, in a tone far from conciliatory, requested payment of the rent.

"Very well," replied Millicent, though with some confusion. "I am going into

town in the afternoon, and will pay you when I return."

"I hope you understands, ma'am, that I don't give any credit," returned Mrs. Grimshaw, fiercely.

"You shall have your money this evening," said Millicent.

Mrs. Grimshaw had a way, as shown on a former occasion, of firing a parting shot outside the door.

"If I don't, out you'll pack, I can tell you," she now muttered, on reaching the passage; "and I'll be paid out of your boxes, if there's anything in 'em."

Stung by her insolence, Millicent would have proceeded at once on the errand she contemplated, in order to hasten the promised payment; but was withheld by a hope of receiving a letter from Fanny, for which, ignorant at what hour the post came in, she waited till late in the day. At last, she could

delay no longer, and with a heavy heart, now despairing of any communication from Fanny, though never doubting the truthfulness and generosity of her character, she set out for the city.

What strange fluctuations of hope and fear fill the bitter cup of suspense! As Millicent, harassed with a thousand conflicting thoughts, walked slowly on, her plan for raising a loan seemed less practicable than she had imagined, and she even began to apprehend that the announcement on the shop-door, by which it had been suggested, must be a mistake. It was with trembling steps that she approached the shop, but a glance at the door, as she drew nearer, restored her confidence. There, blazoned in gilt letters, on a blue ground, the kindly and cheering words met her eye — "MONEY LENT."

Hastily entering, she found herself in a sort

of stall, in front of a high counter, where a ghastly-looking man, in bib and apron of black calico, was immediately in attendance.

"Am I right in supposing you lend money, sir?" stammered Millicent, greatly embarrassed.

"Quite right, ma'am," replied the pawnbroker, with a smile. "What is the article, ma'am?"

A glimmering of the truth broke on Millicent, and she produced her watch and trinkets. The pawnbroker, taking one by one, examined them attentively, at the same time snatching covert but searching glances at Millicent.

"I can let you have twenty pounds on these articles, ma'am," he said, at length, perfectly satisfied with appearances.

Twenty pounds! What a fortune did it seem to the poor, drooping, destitute girl! Gladly and gratefully she concluded the con-

tract; and, securing the precious pieces in her purse, left the shop.

Impatient to reach home, she entered an omnibus, followed closely by a gentleman with black, curly moustachios, wearing a seedy blue surtout, buttoned up to the throat, and very tightly strapped trousers. It was Spanish Bill.

"They takes thirteen insides to the dozen here, ma'am," he said, placing himself next Millicent. "But Jim along Josey, as Shakspeare observes. Off she goes."

And off the massive vehicle did go, carrying not only thirteen, but an extra one on the steps.

Millicent, jammed in a corner, found a very fidgety neighbour in Spanish Bill, who was continually twisting himself about; but suddenly, after proceeding a short distance, he called to the conductor to stop, and jumped out. The omnibus resumed its pro-

gress, making occasional stoppages, and, at length, arrived at the point where Millicent was to alight. But, instead of rising, she sank back on her seat, with a cry of despair. Her dress had been cut down; her pocket rifled; and all she possessed was gone.

In the confusion that followed she scarcely took any part, standing like one stupified, unconscious. She answered mechanically the questions put to her; but what was their import, or how they bore on her loss, she did not attempt to think. At last, the omnibus drove off, and she found herself pursuing her way alone.

On arriving at Mrs. Grimshaw's, she gave a tremulous knock on the door, and it was opened by the worthy hostess, who, however, instead of giving admittance, blocked up the passage, holding the door in her hand. Millicent's despairing look had alarmed her.

"You must pay me my rent, ma'am, before

you comes in, please," she said, with the glare of a tigress.

"I cannot pay you this moment," replied Millicent, in frantic accents. "Since I went out, I have had a great misfortune. See! my dress and pocket have been cut open, and all my money stolen!"

"A pretty story, truly, and this, too, after all the fine airs as you've give yourself. But you won't impose upon me, though I am a lone widow, with nobody to stand up for me. No, ma'am, your boxes don't budge from here, till you've paid me my rent."

"I do not wish it: I would not remove them on any account," said Millicent, earnestly, "and, if you will only trust me a little time, till I can look round, I will pay you with interest."

"When you pays, you may come in, but not before," returned the obdurate Grimshaw.—And she slammed the door in her face.

CHAPTER IV.

It is night, and Millicent is in the streets—houseless, destitute! The idea is so terrible—the change from affluence to extreme penury so sudden, that as she walks along, with rapid though weary steps, wandering she knows not whither, her mind can scarcely realize the dread truth. But too forcibly does every object attest and proclaim it.—She does not dream!

It is growing late, but multitudes still thread the streets, which flare with ten thousand lights. What will it be when, in

the dead hour of night, the vast thorough-fares are hushed and deserted?—when the poor forlorn girl will be flitting through them alone, or meeting, in her silent and solitary progress, only evil-doers, night-walkers, and men of violence? Already the shops begin to shut; the bats and owls of society quit their hiding-holes, and vile language and flash apparel, the livery of vice, announce to simplest ears their abandoned character.

Unconsciously Millicent has traversed the city, crossed the river, and reached Kennington—the Tusculum of city shopocrats. Wider intervals between lamps; private houses,

the Pottery, into Lambeth. Here, dense and loathsome byways, scarcely wide enough for the passage of a cart, wound, like snakes, round vast gasometers, engine-houses, and manufactories of fireworks, which, jammed into one mass, made the air black even at noon with their virulent breath, at night spreading itself as a fog. The atmosphere seemed balmy in comparison, when, at last emerging from these slums, Millicent came out in the Bridge-Road. A mob was just streaming out of Astley's, for a moment covering the causeways, and swarming the oyster-shops and taverns, but only a sprinkle of people were on the Bridge. Millicent lingered to look on the dark face of the broad deep Thames, our fountain and sewer, flowing placidly below. A rude grasp on her arm dispersed the sad and gloomy thoughts that came thickening round her. It was a policeman, who, observing her rapt attitude,

thought she was meditating suicide, and desired her to "move on," following her a few paces behind till she reached Bridge-Street. Again there was a momentary bustle, as the House of Commons, after a fiery and protracted debate, poured its tributary tide into the streets, where, borne away in every description of vehicle, it was absorbed in an instant. Only a few stragglers loitered on the broad pavement of Whitehall, but the voices of two tuneful rakes, fresh from the classic smoke of the Coal-hole or the Cyder-Cellars, could be heard shouting in discordant din, the last words of the stout old glee, "We won't go home till morning." A solitary sentinel paced to and fro within the closed

at Charing-Cross. The clock of St. Martin's tolled one.

At length the mighty city seemed asleep, though even now an occasional passenger hurried by, or a cab rumbled over the echoing stones, like muttered thunder. With increased dread Millicent found herself involved in a maze of dark and narrow streets, opening to blind courts, and gloomy yards, where, such is the reckless security of misery, even among thieves, the crazy doors are never shut, and open windows, gasping for the noxious vapours of midnight, feebly ventilate rooms peopled like towns. From Saffron-Hill, and its guilty, hideous purlieus, fastened like a leprosy on the very heart of the city, she escaped, at last, to Islington. In passing the churchyard, a strange, pattering, rustling noise broke on her ear, accompanied by the barking of a dog, and while considering what it could be, she descried

an immense flock of sheep, followed by a drove of cattle, coming down the road. Scarcely had these gone by, when they were succeeded by others, all bound to the same great market of Smithfield, where traffic commences with the first peep of dawn. Thus, almost as the previous day expired, the routine of the great concerns of commerce was resumed.

But again all was quiet; and with sore and weary feet, Millicent dragged through Holloway, wandering on towards the Arch

ance, and Millicent, tired and wretched as she was, looked round with a feeling of interest.

The cutting shelved back on bush and mead; and further on, embosomed in wood, rose the Whittington alms-houses—a row of picturesque white cottages, which Millicent, in the dim twilight, took for villas. Seated on the same spot, five centuries before, a poor beggar boy, miserable and friendless as herself, had been wiled back to the infant city by the chimes of Bow bells. What persuasive voice—what potent Intelligence, strong for good or evil, would recal *her?*

Suddenly she heard a footfall—a slow, shambling step, reverberated distinctly by the hard road; and, looking up, saw a figure approaching, soon distinguished as a man. At first, the appearance of a passenger, in a spot so lonely and sequestered, alarmed her; but accustomed to view objects in the dark,

her quick eye was reassured by a glance at his decrepid form, bowed and contracted chest, and drooping head, all betokening one disposed more for peace than violence. As he came up, a slight movement made him sensible of her presence, and he stopped.

"Is it a woman?" he murmured. "Poor thing! you ain't come out for the air, like me, I'll be bound! Have you been here all night?"

"No," answered Millicent, falteringly, though his tone and words gave her courage,

hard on you. But you're a young thing to be all night in the streets, and not one o' the common, nyther. How comes that?"

"I was turned out of my lodging, after losing everything I had," replied Millicent, emotion almost choking her utterance. "You say you have daughters," she continued, after a pause, which the man did not interrupt.—"Oh, sir! they may be able to tell me where I can get employment—work, however laborious, to procure me a shelter at night. It has been so dreadful—so terrible! another such night would break my heart! Oh, sir! will you take pity upon me? will you help me?"

"Help you! How can I, bein' but a poor Spitalfields weaver myself? Ah! you may guess I have to toil hard, when it's only at three o'clock in the mornin', before it's light, that I can find time to take a walk, though they say it's a fine thing for my health. But,

it's very true, my girls might know of somethin'. Yes, they might!"—And he seemed to consider a moment.—"There's my Tom, who's a soldier, in the East Indyees," he resumed, at length, in a low voice—"who knows? he might be lyin', now, poor lad, like you—or wounded, p'rhaps, in some o' them battles as he writes about. No! I won't see you lost, if I can help it. We'll just hear what my girls says, if you like to come with me."

"Oh, gladly! gladly!" cried Millicent, in eager accents, never doubting his worth and truthfulness.

In a few minutes they were on their way, Millicent finding new strength, though her feet, all bruised and blistered, could scarcely bear to touch the ground.

Once more the still dark streets were astir. Troops of men and women with huge milk-cans, hurrying from the great Islington dairy,

where they had procured their morning supply, passed as they proceeded, dispersing to every quarter. Steaming coffee-stalls stood at conspicuous corners, arresting the steps of artisans and mechanics, as they repaired breakfastless to work, though not a few, vitiated by habits of intemperance, preferred the more stimulating compounds of rum and milk, and foaming purl, now to be had at the public-houses. Millicent and the weaver, however, wrapped in sad thoughts, heeded nothing around, and walking steadily on, daylight found them in Spitalfields.

CHAPTER V.

Luke Fielding, the weaver, had well
that his life was one of hard and in
sant toil; and, to speak truth, his

looked, its gutter stagnant in the centre, completely choked by accumulations of filth—its windows broken and tattered, with wet clothes dangling, banner-like, on triangular lines, from the upper storeys, and with the smoke beaten down by the dense and oppressive atmosphere. The tenements were let in floors and rooms, even to the cellar; and, for the first time, Millicent, following the friendly weaver, entered one of those crowded abodes which form the fruitful nurseries of pestilence, harbouring more diseases than Pandora's box.

The Fieldings occupied the front room of the ground floor, and a sort of loft at the top of the house, which, being Luke's workshop, resounded through the day with the busy loom, and at night afforded a sleeping place for his daughters.

All were now assembled down stairs, and Mrs. Fielding and Ruth, a quiet, modest-

looking girl, actively engaged with her needle, stood up as Millicent entered, imagining from her appearance that she was some person of consideration. Mary, the elder girl, remained seated, winding silk on a reel, though she turned on the lady-visitor a glance of dogged sullenness, very unsuited to her pretty face.

"Have you got a bit of somethin' for breakfast, Bess?" said Luke to his wife. "Here's a poor thing as has been out all night, and, I doubt, she'll be glad of a bite of bread."

to put you out, and the poor lady does look badly. She shall have my share and welcome, if you'll give it to her."

"Hold your tongue, you poor silly," returned Mrs. Fielding. "You've got nothin' to do with *her* sort."

"Yes, she has," exclaimed Mary, who had been regarding Millicent unobserved, but now started from her seat, and came forward, "and so have you and so have all on us. You'll say so, if you looks at her face. But that doesn't matter. If so be she's only poor, every body'll trample on her, and the poor'll be the first to do it."

This rebuke silenced Mrs. Fielding—for Mary, as the favourite of both parents, and proud and ungovernable in disposition, was the ruling spirit of the household. Without waiting to see the effect of her words she turned to a cupboard, and took out a hunch of bread.

"Here," she said, presenting it to Millicent, "I wish it was somethin' better."

"No—no thank you," returned Millicen[illegible] much moved at this touch of kindness. "[illegible] am not hungry—only tired, so very tire[illegible] Your father thought, too, you might be ab[illegible] to get me some work."

It was strange to see how even Mrs. Fiel[illegible]ing, despite her worldliness and thrift, w[illegible] affected by the sweetness and softness of h[illegible] voice, as she uttered this moving appe[illegible] Little Ruth could not restrain herself.

anythin' we knows, our Tom may be sufferin' this very moment."

"Our Tom!" exclaimed Mrs. Fielding. "Sit down, young woman. Poor as we be, we won't turn you out o' doors."

Thus Millicent entered the weaver's family.

CHAPTER VI.

Mrs. Lightfoot, the dressmaker wh
ployed Ruth Fielding, agreed to engage
licent, who, as a very quick hand, was t

people were packed, stifling each other with their confined breath, reminded the poor girl of her early days in the coal-pit, only that, with all its miseries, they still had light. Yet in this hotbed—this hole of Calcutta—she was to pass fifteen dreary, toiling, wearisome hours, scarcely interrupted by the so-called meals of breakfast and tea, which, when brought in, proved to be a single cup of slop for each person, and one thin slice of bread, scraped over with a buttery knife. On such fare they had to sustain the agony of that day-and-a-half of labour!

What a relief—what a joy, was the long-deferred moment of breaking up! Millicent was like a new creature, when, reaching the street, hand in hand with Ruth, she felt the night breeze on her burning cheek. Even hunger and thirst were forgotten in that sweet, delicious draught of air.

On arriving home, they found Mrs. Field-

ing busy by candlelight, stitching cuffs, an employment with which she adroitly contrived to fill up time, and which, as she was a good needlewoman, and worked about four hours every day, enabled her to add about sixpence a week to the general income. Poor Luke, who had just left off work, was huddled in a chair in one corner, looking the picture of exhaustion and misery.

"Ah! my dears! I'm glad you're come," cried Mrs. Fielding, as the two girls entered. "Me and father be uncommon dull to-night, and it's a comfort to see your faces. There, sit down, do."

A kiss on her mother's brow, was Ruth's reply, and then, without speaking, she crossed over to her father, and gave the same salute to him.

"Is Mary out again?" Ruth then said, in what seemed a sad voice.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Fielding "she's been

hard at the reel all day, poor girl, and tired she were : so she says, when father and her had their bit o' supper; 'Mother,' says she, 'I'll just step out an hour with Will Kingston. My heart's broke,' says she, 'with so much work, and Will is goin' to take me to the Penny Theaytur.' And I bid her go, poor thing!"

A pause followed these words, only broken by a half-suppressed sigh from Luke, while Millicent and Ruth, equally grieved at Mary's absence, ate their frugal supper of bread in silence. Ruth handed her friend a cup of water, but it emitted such a foul stench that, thirsty as she was, Millicent could not drink. After a time they bade the old couple good night, and repaired to the attic.

"Now I've got a little job of my own to do," said Ruth, on reaching their miserable sleeping-place, and sinking into a chair as she spoke. "It's the body of a gown I've took in

to make, and I'm to have a shilling for i
must finish it to-night, but you can go to
you know, Millicent."

"No, I will sit and help you."

"You can't, I'm sure. You ain't used
like me. I wonders how you've kept c
you have."

"Oh, I am stronger than you think, a
great deal stronger than you are. If I
to bed, I could not sleep, knowing you
at work; and a little water just to wash
face, will freshen me up wonderfully."

for it; but Mary goes every other day, and gets two buckets."

"Then let us commence our sewing, dear, or you will not get the body finished to-night."

But their busy needles were soon as active and quick as if set to work for the first time, though drooping frames, and pale, languid faces, evinced too plainly their excessive weariness.

"I wonder if them ladies as we made the grand dresses for to-day, for the West-end shop, ever thinks of such poor creatures as us," said Ruth, suddenly, after a long pause. "I doubt, they don't mind much what Our Saviour says, 'It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.'"

"I hope they do," answered Millicent. "There are rich people very pious and benevolent, but there is so much distress, you know, Ruth, they can't relieve it all."

"No; but Mary says if every rich man was to do what good he can, the poor would have a better wage. I don't know, as to that; but it's certain there's some of 'em good, as you says; and I needn't go further than the people as have built the new church here. They calls 'em black sheep, and other sort o' names, but they've come to preach to the poor, and I love 'em for it."

"You go to church, then, do you, dear Ruth?"

"Oh, yes! I used to go to the Methodisses before it were built; but now, in the Sunday evenin', if I can only get done in time, I always goes into the new Church. It's beautiful to hear 'em. Yes, beautiful!" continued the poor girl, resting her tired hand on her lap, and looking upward—"beautiful to hear of our Father in Heaven, who watches over the poor, and feeds and protects us, and though He lets us suffer a bit in this world, the

clergyman says He's got a home for us in His own Kingdom, where we shall be happy. How pleasant it would be to die, and go to Him, only it would be leaving them as we love so."

"You must not say that, dear Ruth. It is only by submitting to the Almighty's will, whatever it may be, that we can hope to obtain his rewards. It does not follow, because we are poor, and subjected to hardships and privations, for the few brief years spent on earth, that we are to enjoy a future of perfect bliss. You know, we must be patient, obedient, dutiful, dear Ruth, and you are all these. The trial is a hard one—harder for you, perhaps, with your weakly health, than for me, but He who has even numbered the hairs of our head will try none of us above our strength."

"No, no! I ain't afraid He would. But there's one thing, Millicent"— and her voice

What could Millicent say, when
eyes, fresh at the work as they we
to dim, making the delicate, tiny sti
into each other, as if they had life and
She remained silent; and Ruth, co
worn out, saddened, and now become
did not care to say anything further
Millicent next looked up, her head
on her bosom; and with needle a
still in her hand—with thread ha
through the seam, which was almo
from her lap, the poor sempstress wa

A long interval elapsed, and Mill
finished

unnatural light shone in her eyes, which, as they met Millicent's, flashed under her darkly-clouded brow like lightning.

"Still at work—night and day at work!" she cried. "And poor Ruth! she looks just like a corpse."

"I let her stay where she was," replied Millicent, apologetically, "because, I knew, if I woke her to lie down, she would insist on resuming work. But it is done now, and I will get her to bed."

But Ruth's light sleep, the mere lull of fatigue, was already disturbed by their voices.

"Thank you, thank you, kindly," she said, kissing Millicent's hand. "How good of you to help me, when so tired yourself. Dear Mary, ain't you very late?"

"Yes, it's one o'clock."

"Then, let us say prayers, and go to bed."

"I ain't goin' to say prayers any more. Why should I? I gets no good by it."

"Oh, Mary! don't talk so—it's wicked. If you'd only pray, dear, it would console you. You'd find as even us have a good deal to be thankful for, and there was never truer words than them in the Psalm—'how joyful a thing it is to give thanks unto the Lord.' I was pining myself just now, but Millicent kindly told me how wrong it were; and, I hope, I sha'nt ever murmur again."

"I wish you and Millicent 'ud mind your own business, and leave me alone," returned Mary, petulantly.

But before many minutes had elapsed, those sharp and hasty words were bitterly repented; and when Millicent and Ruth laid down by her side, Mary's eyes were bathed in tears.

CHAPTER VII.

A FEW days at Mrs. Lightfoot's acclimated Millicent to the close and pestilential work-shop. But this was followed by the natural and usual consequences; and the foul atmosphere, combined with incessant toil, confinement, and bad and insufficient diet, stole the soft, rich bloom from her cheek, dimmed the lustre of her eye, wasted her lovely form, and broke and bowed down her once cheerful spirit. Only her noble, immutable endurance remained unshaken.

In this deplorable situation, she learnt ac-

cidentally, on taking some work to a bazaar, that she could procure employment as a maker of wax-flowers, an art she had acquired for amusement; and, conferring with Ruth, the few shillings required for materials and implements were raised at a pawnbroker's, and she commenced operations forthwith. She was now able, by working the same number of hours as before, to earn between five and six shillings a week; and had the additional advantage of exchanging Mrs. Lightfoot's workshop for that of Luke, where, confined as it was, the air was not absolutely poison.

Thus things continued for a little time, when one of those periodical suspensions of trade so frequent in the unhappy region of Spitalfields, and productive of such disastrous and fatal effects, threw both Luke and Mary out of work. The whole family were now dependant on Millicent and Ruth, whose united wages, swelled by the trifling sum

earned by Mrs. Fielding, amounted to scarcely seven shillings weekly. On that scant income five persons were to subsist, after paying nearly half for rent.

Millicent bore up bravely. Such hearts as hers are made to struggle, to suffer, and to show in suffering their innate, their marvellous goodness. And when the erring and feeble creature, at best imperfect, offers such a beautiful example, can we ask a more convincing testimony to the supreme beneficence of the Creator? Of a verity, every affliction flesh is heir to, purposeless and crude though it seem, has its appointed mission!

Perhaps there is nothing so hard to endure as the keen, excruciating pangs of hunger; yet it is strange how little food the human frame, with all its wondrous and complicated mechanism, can contrive to exist on. How Millicent and the Fieldings lived was a mystery to themselves! A few green onions, a stump of cabbage, picked up from a green-

grocer's waste, and a slice of bread—or, per-
haps, two or three radishes, and some nettle
was their fare for weeks; and, worse than all,
they were unable to procure fresh, drinkable
water!

One morning, after a brief and troubled
sleep, Millicent rose with light, determined
to go herself to the pool, and procure an extra
supply. Though instructed by Mary, it was
with difficulty she made out the way; but, at
last, after traversing a labyrinth of crooked
courts and passages, she arrived at a crazy
wooden stair, descending to a stream filthy

Her pitcher filled, Millicent was leaving the fruitful plague-stream, when a figure appeared above, hovering over the stair, who might have been taken for its tutelary genius. Matted hair, a wild and haggard look, and his gaunt, meagre form, the impersonation of famine, too clearly denoted one of the distressed weavers; but it was not in this humble and worldly light that he viewed himself. A scroll on his hat was inscribed, in large letters, with the word "JUDGMENT;" and he held up a staff, surmounted by a placard, which, in accordance with the blazon on his hat, bore this wrathful announcement—

"THE CITY HAS BEEN WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE, AND GIVEN OVER TO SWIFT DESTRUCTION.

"BEHOLD, THE PLAGUE! THE PLAGUE!"

With a feeling of irrepressible dread, Millicent hurried past the pseudo Jonah, and up the court, never looking behind till she

reached home. There, her thoughts were soon engrossed by a new incident.

She was at work in the loft, where the unwieldy loom now stood idle, when she was disturbed by an unusual noise below; and hastening down-stairs, found Mrs. Fielding sobbing and crying, Luke with his face buried in his hands, in mute despair; and Mary, who had latterly been every day more and more wilful, and seemingly quite indifferent to everything around, for the moment touched by the deep grief of her parents.

"What has happened?" cried Millicent, with an exclamation of sympathy. "Mary, tell me—pray tell me!"

"I can't without cursin'—without wishin' as I'd never been born, and that none of us had," answered Mary. "What did we come into the world for, if we're never to know nothin' but misery—ever and ever misery?"

"Hush! hush, Mary!" said Millicent,

soothingly. "We must not be so impatient."

"She says what's true, however," cried Mrs. Fielding, "and it's enough to make the stones speak; but the poor, I know, has got no right to. No! and it's all one to father there, who'll keep on the same way, doin' people turns, no matter what comes of his own family. But I wonder who'll do a turn for *us* now!—ay, that's it, who'll lend *us* a hand?"

"Don't blame father," interposed Mary. "He ain't got the heart to deny any one, and how could he know he'd be betrayed?"

"I haven't been, Mary, dear," said Luke, meekly. "Poor George has been out o' work nigh on a month, and now he's ill a-bed: so he can't help it. You should ha' seen him when I told him of it—how he took on, cryin' like any child, poor fellow! It made my heart ache, though I was in such trouble myself."

" I wish it had ached for your own, instead of for other people," said Mrs. Fielding. " Well, well, I know it do now, and I won't say any more. Only to think of your bein' sent to prison ! Oh, dear ! oh, dear !"—And she burst into a new passion of grief.

Conversing a few moments apart, Millicent learnt from Mary what had been the cause of the distressing scene, from which it appeared that Luke, with characteristic good-nature, had become security for a sovereign lent to an old fellow-craftsman, named George Smithers, by one of the infamous small loan

hope was in the mercy and forbearance of the judge.

At length, Luke rose, and set off for the court, though his poor, worn, timid spirit, enfeebled by want and nervous depression, shrank from the trying task imposed on him. His return was awaited by Millicent and Mrs. Fielding with intense anxiety, and, after a time, even Mary, though she had relapsed into her customary sullenness, grew restless, and turned uneasy glances on the door. At last it opened, and Luke entered, but so pale, so haggard, so completely bowed down and crushed, that it needed not to tell how he had sped, and, repressing their feelings, all flew forward to help him.

"Father, don't take on so," said Mary, throwing her arm round his neck. "They can't kill you. They won't be let do that."

"They sha'n't do any thing to him," cried Mrs. Fielding. "Cheer up, old man. Afore they shall touch you, we'll sell everything

as we've got, and that'll nigh on raise the money, if it don't all out."

"You don't know what it is," replied Luke, in failing accents. "They've run up thirty shillings law expenses—thirty shillings! and now they've took out a judgment as they calls it, and they're goin' to put a distress in. Oh! mother! girls! what will become of us?"

There was little time to consider, for as he ceased speaking, the door opened, admitting two men, in extremely shabby suits of black, who, stepping up to Luke, served the execution.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHEN Ruth returned home that night—sick, famished, and worn to a shadow, she found it a refuge no longer. Mary had gone out, but her afflicted and sorrowing parents were not left comfortless, and Millicent, with her sweet voice, and healing words, tried to soften their anguish, and now gave new courage to Ruth. But where was the mysterious power that could give her new strength, new life?

For a long time Mrs. Fielding would speak of nothing but their troubles and the hopeless prospect before them; but by degrees, soothed

and consoled by Millicent, she wandered to other topics, taking especial comfort in speaking of her son.

"A fine brave lad he is, though I says it as shouldn't," she observed, "Ah! there was many a wet eye, hereabout, when it were know'd he'd listed, but nothin' would sarve him but to go a soadgerin—Poor Tom! poor, dear Tom! what would I give to see his dear, handsome face again!"

"So you will see it, dear mother," said Ruth, pressing her hand. "He'll come back. I'm sure he won't forget us!"

"Forget us! No, no! my boy, my Tom, if he was away all his life, 'ud always remember home."

"I can't help bein' glad," observed Luke—for though his voice was broken with suppressed sobs, he could not refrain from speaking of his only and so well-loved son: "I can't help bein' glad as Tom ain't here to see our misery. And yet, sometimes, when I

hears o' them great battles, and specially that last one, as Tom wrote us word he was goin' to, I wishes he was once at home again—that I do."

"Was that the last battle of all?" asked Millicent, anxious to give a turn to the poor weaver's thoughts.

"I believe it were," replied Luke, "though they has battles there wonderful often, and maybe there's been another afore this. Howsomever, it's the last as I've heard on."

"Then it was the great battle with the Sikhs, that happened about a year ago."

"Yes, and we ain't had a line from Tom since," observed Mrs. Fielding. "Only, there's one good thing, we found out he wasn't killed. Bless my boy!—if I could see his dear, dear face once more!"

There was a slight noise at the door, as of some one trying to raise the latch, and presently it was pushed open, and they were all startled to see a man in the garb of a

soldier. For a moment he stood motionless on the threshold, regarding them in silence; and then it was that, aided by the flickering rushlight, they saw that his form was bent with suffering, that one sleeve of his faded coat hung armless at his side, and that his swarthed face, his crippled frame, his lank palsied limbs, showed only the wreck of a man.

A sharp cry broke from Mrs. Fielding, and she flew to the door, clasping the soldier in her arms.

"Tom! my own Tom!" she exclaimed, in a burst of uncontrollable anguish.

"Bless you, mother!—bless you! I thought as you wouldn't know me," replied the soldier. "There, don't cry, old woman—cheer up! that's it! that's it! And father, too! and Ruth"—and he kissed them both, as they pressed round him.—"But that ain't our Mary!"

"No, it's a friend—a kind friend, dear

Tom," said Ruth—for neither her father nor mother could speak.

"Then, bless her, too," said Tom, shaking Millicent's hand. "And now don't let's have any more cryin', mother—no, no! sit down, and you'll come-to presently. Now, father, you haven't said a word to me. Come, tell me how you all are, and what's doin', and everything, though I'm afraid, now I've lost my arm, I've come back to be a burden on you?"

"Not a bit, lad," exclaimed the sobbing voice of Luke, while Mrs. Fielding, in an excess of emotion, clasped his war-worn frame with her arms, "Not a bit, Tom, my boy! Please God! the times'll mend, and you won't press us at all, Tom, dear!"—Yet as he thought of the execution in the house, and of the broker's man up-stairs, while they had scarcely tasted food the whole day, poor Luke could not repress a groan.—"But your arm, Tom! that *do* grieve me—your poor arm, my dear, dear boy."

"Oh! Tom! how did you come to lose it?" said Ruth, kissing the maimed limb.

"Why, it's no use makin' a fuss about it now, and grievin' for what's gone, but it was in that last battle with the Sikhs. It was night, d'ye see, after a long march, that we come on the ground, and not one of us but was fagged out. I don't know how I stood it myself, and you may think how bad we was off, when, officers and men together, we couldn't muster a canteen o' liquor or a bite o' bread in the whole regiment."

"Poor things!" murmured Mrs. Fielding.

"But you ain't told us yet how it happened, Tom," said Luke, breathlessly.

"Well, we'd just laid down for the night, father, thinkin' of what was before us, and maybe of them at home, when pop went a cannon, and, before you could say Jack, the General, that's old Lord Gough, prances up on his horse, and, says he, 'Forty-third, there they are: fix bay'nets, and give the rascals

a prickin',' says he. So, with that, we sets up a hurrah, and dashed into the jungle."

"Dear, dear! and all of you so tired!" said Mrs. Fielding.

"It didn't matter for that; for most on us was soon asleep, though it was never to wake. In a minute the jungle was as if it was on fire. A hundred cannons all blazed out on us, and the yellin', the shoutin', the firin', the smoke, the flyin' cavalry, and the drums and bugles playin', so as you couldn't hear the word o' command, stunned and staggered you, just as if you was drunk. The dead was as thick as peas, so as some was actually standin' up on their feet, only just leanin' back a bit, against a reg'lar heap. I think there was about a dozen Sikhs on me at once, and though I managed to stick my bay'net into a couple on 'em, they didn't stand for trifles, but one fellow behind lifts up his sabre and had my arm off chop, as clean as a whistle. Then I fell down, and the horses came on like

thunder, gallopin' over me. and I didn't see any more. You'll hardly believe it, but I feels the horses' hoofs, like, tramplin' on me now."

"And you're faint, Tom—you're hungry, lad, I doubt," said Luke, with a wistful, pained look at Mrs. Fielding.

"And you ain't got much in the store, I know, father," answered Tom. "No, you'd have had it out before this, if you had. But I ought to tell you they didn't turn me off penniless. When I was discharged, considerin' I'd had four years' service, and lost my arm and health, they gave me a gratuty, as they calls it, of three months' pay, and though it's dwindled down somehow, the stock ain't out yet."—And drawing a little soiled bag from within his coat, he produced two sovereigns and a shilling—a reward for four years' service amidst pestilence and war, which had cost him youth, health, and his good right arm, disabling him for life from any employment—

a reward, be it well remembered, worthy of the good feeling of imperial England, that mighty, opulent, and generous country.

"It's blood money," cried Mrs. Fielding. "I won't touch it—not a penny on it!"

"But we must get him somethin' to eat," said Luke, with a despairing look.

"Yes, and poor Ruth, too," said Millicent, gently interposing. "See, she is so ill. She can scarcely hold up her head."

"Kindly said, friend," observed Tom, "and if we never has a bit again, we'll be a little comfortable to-night: so go, like a good lass, and get somethin' in. There, pluck up, Ruth, But, good Lord! what is this? Ruth! Ruth!"

The poor girl, after contriving for some time to remain unnoticed, had fallen helpless on his shoulder; and while her wan skeleton fingers pressed convulsively against her cramped body, her face quivered, her eyes

seemed to start from their sockets, and her complexion grew perfectly livid.

"Run for some brandy!" cried Tom, placing a sovereign in Millicent's hand. "She has got the chol'ra."

CHAPTER IX.

It is curious that things which startle and appal us in the imaginative pages of De Foe, when passing under our own eyes in London, in the Autumn of 1848, scarcely attracted a moment's attention. Yet all the usual forerunners of a general pestilence preceded this visitation of the cholera; and its deadly march through the various countries of Europe, from St. Petersburgh to Paris, told what we must expect from its ravages. It was announced in awful tones from the pulpit, warning us that men are even "as a sleep, and fade away

suddenly like the grass," frenzied enthusiasts and fanatics, the avant-couriers of such afflictive epochs, proclaimed it in the busiest streets, to gaping and often mocking crowds, who would not see their danger; and, finally, medical manifestoes on its symptoms and treatment were paraded to the public eye in every corner. Still, it fell upon us, at last, like a thunderbolt.

It has been already shown that one, at least, of the alarming indications abroad had not escaped Millicent, though incessant occupation secluded her from what was passing around; and it will not be thought strange that the sudden appearance of the malignant disease under the very roof that sheltered her, striking down her companion and bedfellow, without warning, without even the slightest premonitory symptom, seemed to her like a realisation of the crazy weaver's prophecy. In the desperate extremity to which she was reduced, this impression, holding out a pro-

spect so terrible, awakened no apprehension for herself; but the thought of what might happen to her desolate and helpless friends, occasioned her the most poignant and bitter distress.

On returning with the brandy, she found Ruth writhing in the pangs and agonies of that fearful disease, a spectacle that made the blood curdle; and, hearing that she could be of no assistance, went in search of Mary, whom a young mechanic next door, professing a warm attachment for her, had, in her desire to avoid the sight of so much misery at home, too easily induced to accompany him to a place of amusement, where, by a stretch of the statute, music and dancing were kept up till a late hour.

Zoar Chapel, in the midst of this plain of Gomorrah, was originally an Independent meeting-house, but, the congregation failing, had been converted by its late pastor into the more profitable investment of a cemetery, and

finally had become an abomination of the most revolting character. Bodies had been interred in the yard around till they actually peered through the surface, though removed, from time to time, under cover of night, to excavations under the adjacent dwellings, which literally rested on a mass of putrifying corpses. The pile of coffins in the vault beneath the chapel, receiving augmentations to the last moment, jammed up against the floor, which, being old and crazy, bulged to the pressure, and in some places was broken, disclosing the hideous package. Small chips, with bits of black cloth adhering, were scattered about, or heaped in corners; and long, slimy worms and loathsome spawn found their way to the filthy walls. Flaring gas-lights added their smoke to the reeking atmosphere, to which windows long closed, and thickly-coated with dust, denied the slightest approach to circulation. Such was the Casino of Bethnal Green!

Unable to pay the customary charge, Mil-

licent was at first refused admission; but ultimately, on hearing her story, the door-keeper suffered her to pass, exacting a promise that she wonld return immediately. The stench outside, rising in fœtid exhalations from the partially uncovered graves, had almost overpowered her, but now it was tenfold more virulent, and with difficulty she resisted a feeling of deadly nausea, making her brain swim. Pushing through the bacchanal crowd, with a wild glance at each pale spectral face, in which, with all their noise and unnatural mirth, disease and premature decay were indelibly stamped, she at last discerned Mary, sitting on a bench with her lover, Will Kingston.

"What's the use o' goin' to a parson?" Will was saying. "It's only a thing got up to put money in their pockets; and then they laughs at you, for makin' such fools o' yourselves. I thought as you was a bit sharper nor that, Mary."

"I don't want to be married to please the parsons, but because it suits myself," replied Mary, angrily. "I hates the parsons as much as you do; I hates every one that's rich. But I've found out now that all the world has the same feelin'—and *that*, when it comes out, is to trample on them as can't help theirselves."

"You're making a fuss about nothin'. You've took to these notions lately; and they're put into your head, I doubt, by that new girl as has come to hang out with you, and holds her head so high, she'll hardly speak to the like of us."

"I don't want her to speak to me, nor any one else. I judge for myself. But you've got my answer, and I needn't say any more."—She broke off with an exclamation, as Millicent stood before her.

"Mary," said Millicent, "I am so glad to have found you. You must leave this dreadful place, and come home directly."

"Home!" answered Mary: "I've got none. What's home to me but sorrow, and misery, and starvation!"

"And here I offers you a good one, where you may do as you like, if you'll only be 'greeable," observed Kingston, who had just quaffed deeply from a pewter pot, which, after wiping the rim with his sleeve, he handed to Millicent. "Sign your name to that, young woman; for you looks as if you wanted; and it's food and drink, this beer. You won't? Oh! very well! You've got too good soles to your shoes, yet, I think."

"You'd best leave her alone," said Mary. "She won't meddle with you, I wager. Here, friend, sit down."

"Not for worlds," replied Millicent. "I cannot stop a moment, and you must go away with me, Mary. Your brother has come home, and poor Ruth has been taken very ill. Pray, come—pray do."

"Yes, yes," said Mary, wildly, and starting

to her feet. "Tom come home, too! Well, well! it never rains but it pours!"

And seizing Millicent's wrist, she almost dragged her to the door, leaving the chapel before Kingston could interpose.

CHAPTER X.

It was after a violent struggle, born with the most touching patience, that Ruth, looking up, fixed her glazed eyes tenderly on Mary, who was supporting her head with her arm.

"Dear Mary, is it you?" she said. "I was afraid I should die without seein' you."

"Don't talk of dyin' Ruth! oh, no! don't, don't!" sobbed Mary. "You'll be better to-morrow. Ain't you in less pain now? You seems easier, dear, I think!"

"Yes, in body, but I know I'm goin' to

die, and I'm unhappy that I've been so wicked—thoughtful only for the present time, neglectin' of my duty to God."

"You, Ruth! you! Oh, no! you haven't. Who could be so quiet, so submissive? And what's God done for us, as we should be always prayin' and thankin',—if there *is* a God!"

"Oh! Mary! Mary!"

"I didn't mean to vex you, dear Ruth! I'll try and think as you do, and believe it, if you'll only give over frettin'.—But we needn't talk about it now.—God ain't like to take notice of such poor folk as us."

"Doesn't God care for the poor, then?" asked Ruth, turning a troubled glance on Millicent, who stood with her father and mother and Tom at the bedside. "You told me as He did, Millicent, and the minister said so. What's them words—'God is no Respecter of persons?'"

"It is true, dear Ruth," answered Milli-

cent, tenderly. "They are St. Paul's words; and you remember Our Saviour says, 'Blessed be ye poor,' and again 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Oh! yes, Ruth! God cares for the poor."

But the troubled look remained on Ruth's face, like the first shadow of death.

"Why do you think o' such things, dear, and you in such pain," said her mother, repressing her own emotion, while Luke, more deeply moved, could only regard her with tender, pitying glances.

"Dear mother, I'm dyin'—I'm sure I am," replied Ruth, faintly; "and p'raps it's the fastin' or the weakness, or the trouble we're all in, but I can't keep my faith. I tries to look up, and it seems a mist, and doubt, and now I'm frightened—my heart's quakin', mother."

"Don't you give way at that, Ruth," said Tom, bending fondly over her. "But you

wants the Chaplain here, to hold up the colours for you! There ain't no parson to be got here, I suppose?"

"There's the minister o' the new Church, Tom, as lives next door to it; but I couldn't ask him to come out this time o' night, could I? Oh! if I could live till morning."

Tom turned towards the door.

"Stay, Tom, I'll go," said old Luke, though he seemed spell-bound to the bed.

But Tom, never heeding his own feebleness, had already hobbled out.

Scarcely had the door closed, when Ruth, despite the continued application of hot flannels and fomentations, judiciously prescribed by Tom, was seized with the most fatal symptom of the disease, a violent and acute cramp, contorting the whole frame.

aided by Mrs. Fielding, could scarcely hold her down; yet once or twice she looked inquiringly round, as if still expecting the clergyman.

"He'll never come," thought Mary, bitterly, as she followed her appealing glances. "No, no! the parsons don't trouble about poor folk."

This reflection was still rankling in her breast, when Tom reappeared, accompanied by the Clergyman, at once refuting her prejudices, and awakening in their place the most grateful emotion:—so easy is it, by the simplest offices of charity and sympathy, to win the kind feelings of the poor!

The priest was one of those good, pious, and venerable men, who, in these latter days of sharp and acrimonious controversy, stand in the fold of the Church like Faith's landmarks, midway between the two extremes, and who, through good report and evil report, persevere in their arduous and holy

mission of extending, strengthening, and re-
generating the ministry. In the first age and
vigour of manhood, after carrying away the
honours of the University, he had eagerly
undertaken the curacy of this poor and mise-
rable district, in preference to a lucrative
benefice, feeling with the zeal of Paul, that
here was a forgotten and long-neglected but
reclaimable waste, where he could best do
his Master's work. What to him were the
jibes, the mockery, the sullen indifference
that met his first and normal efforts? What,
the poverty, the bare decency of his stipend?
—or even, if one judged from his straggling
and uncertain congregation, the seeming
hopelessness of his teaching? Could he
snatch but one brand from the burning—

was for this he came, in the dead of the night, to the desolate dwellings of the poor calmly facing the dread and unsparing pestilence, which had no terrors for him. Let the Great Destroyer strike: he was at his post.

A deeper shade of sympathy suffused his face, as, approaching the bed, he recognised Ruth.

"She is suffering dreadfully," he said to Luke. "Can the Doctor give nothing to relieve her?"

"Oh! sir, we can't get her a doctor," replied Luke. "He won't come on our word, and afore the Overseer'll give the order, we must go afore the Board of Guardians. My poor, dear child must die!"—And he wrung his hands.

"Go to the nearest surgeon," said the clergyman to Tom, giving him his card, "and beg him to come here directly. Yet

stay," he added in a lower tone, as a glance at Ruth's face showed him that fearful, unmistakable change, which immediately precedes death: "it will be useless now. It is too late."

"Ah! your reverence, have you come?" murmured Ruth, faintly, for the first time raising her dimmed eyes to his face. "I hoped—I thought—as you would. You'll tell me of God, and bring back my faith."

The Clergyman bent over her; he knelt at the bedside: he spoke of glorious and cheering promises; of things assured beyond every doubt. She saw Lazarus on Abraham's bosom; and the wealthy and sumptuous Dives, whose portion had been purple and fine linen, tormented in the flame. It was not the rich, not the noble, not the mighty, but the houseless and destitute, the miserable stragglers from the highways and hedges, that she beheld in wedding garments

at the King's supper. She had but to knock, and the everlasting door would be lifted up: her flesh also should rest in hope.

Though still suffering, the excessive torment she had endured, with such touching and saintly patience, was allayed, the extremities having become numb; and she looked round with an expression of serenity almost angelic. Each pressed forward to take her cold, thin hand—to say, beneath their breath, the last sad word of human affection—to bless and kiss her. Then, as their tears flowed unrestrained, though in silence, they heard that dismal, awful, unearthly rattle, in which the departing soul for the first time finds voice, as, with a feeble effort, it bursts the cerements of the flesh, and soars to its Creator.

She was dead! but, O, Death! where was thy sting? O, Grave! where was thy victory?

CHAPTER XI.

A VEIL must be drawn over the horrors and calamities with which Millicent was beset. Azrael, the Angel of Death, was as active and unsparing in the thronged dwellings around her, as he was of old in the vast host of Rabshekah. Wherever she turned, the traces of his dread presence, the fearful extent of his ravages, rose up to affright her. The court in which she lived was almost depopulated. Luke and Mrs. Fielding, while they were yet bewailing their recent bereavement, were themselves cut off,

and ere many hours had elapsed, lay on the same bier with Ruth. But they were not even now to elude the vigilance that guarded them, and the lynx-eyed myrmidon of their creditor, the silent and stern broker, who had haunted and watched them like a ravenous ogre, was still their attendant, following with his claim to the other world. In short, the plague was a whirlwind, which smote and destroyed all it encountered.

These lamentable events naturally made a deep impression on the survivors, who, in the midst of life, felt the grave yawning at their feet. Most of all, they affected Mary, thus suddenly, by one fell stroke, bereft of those she so loved, so venerated. For the moment, her froward, sullen, and refractory nature seemed completely subdued, though its discontent, its resentments, its strong, implacable feeling against the rich, retained ascendancy over her. True, she denied them utterance, but they were not the less active, not the less

bitter, and to Millicent, who watched her as a sister, but with a mother's solicitude, they were but too apparent.

Glancing round, after a long and sad meditation, she met Millicent's gaze, bent fondly and anxiously upon her.

"I know they're out of their misery," she said, in answer to her complaining look, "but, just yet, I can't help frettin'. But as it's all over now, and they're took out of my sight, I'll begin to get more used to it. Maybe, it won't be for long."

"Time is a great soother, if you mean that, Mary," replied Millicent, tenderly. "It takes the sting from our wounds, if it does not heal them; and then, after our first grief is over, there is the hope that we shall meet again, which is so gladdening and comforting. This is our best consolation."

"I wasn't thinking of that."

"And why not, dear Mary? It is better than fostering useless sorrow—better, be as-

sured, than indulging perverse and discontented fancies. You promised not to do so again."—And twining her arm round her, she added in a soft tone, "Don't you remember, Mary?"

"Yes, but they comes into my head—they're in my heart," answered Mary. "I can't help wishin' to be like *them*, with them, dead!"

"Hush, dear Mary. Recollect how we stand, with death on every side of us; and do not—pray, do not wish what a moment might bring about."

"Well, let it—what need I care. I'm dead in my feelin's already, and why should I want to keep up my body?—keep up my own prison! Dear father's gone, and mother and Ruth—none but poor Tom left, and you; and it 'ud be a good job—yes, though I says it, it 'ud be very good for us, if we was all dead together. What have we got to live for?"

"We should wish to live for each other, even if we have nothing else; and, still more, that we may fulfil the will of the Almighty. And believe it, Mary, you—every one, will find there is something in the world you would not willingly part with."

"Not now—I wouldn't now. Once I had a belief——" but recollecting the nature of the meditated confession, so humbling to such a character as hers, she checked herself, almost revealing what she suppressed.

"Why do you stop, Mary?" said Millicent. "Tell me what you believed, what you hoped. Tell me all, dear, and though I may be able to say little to comfort you, you will be taking the burden of the secret from your own heart."

"Oh, it is, it is a burden!" said Mary, sinking on her arm, while she sobbed convulsively. "And now, too, when I'm broke down, when all this is come on me at once, I feel it more, I can't tell you *how* I feel it."

"But you can tell me what it is, knowing I only seek your good."

Mary was silent a moment: then, though without looking up, said abruptly, "It's about Will Kingston, who's been keepin' me company so long, and I thought, from what he was always sayin', that he loved me. *You* know, he was never tired o' bein' after me: he'd let me have no rest. At last, I got to care about him, to be fond on him, and now, when he's made me miserable by it, he won't marry me."

"Then, he is unjust, dishonourable—unworthy of you, Mary. I will not say do not think of him any more, because I believe, with the strong feelings you have, that is impossible, but pray do not love, do not respect him. To do so would be weakness."

Mary wrung her hands.—"Oh! if I could only die! if I could only die!" she exclaimed bitterly. "And yet after all, it isn't Will—it all comes of them par-

sons, them blood-suckers, as feeds and fattens on the poor, and Will stands out against fees to 'em. He'd go to the Registrar's, but I won't consent to that. Why should we pay money to be married, if it's right and good? I don't know! but half the poor ain't married at all, and that's the reason of it."

"Let us not think of that. I know, it is very dreadful, though we cannot say the fault lies with the clergy. We must obey the law, be it what it may. Do not fear, a day will come when the poor will be righted."

"May be," said Mary, mournfully, "but——" She suddenly started, and pointing at the window, said, in an almost inaudible voice, "Look, look, he is here!"— And, in fact, as the words fell from her lips, the door opened, and Will Kingston presented himself.

He was very pale, almost ghastly, and

seemed so feeble, that Millicent, in pity for his condition, hastened to give him a chair.

"Thank ye," he said, sinking into it. "You're one o' the right sort, I see, when it comes to the pint; though you be a bit proud. But I don't know as I've any call to be here."—And he glanced at Mary, who, to conceal her discomposure, looked in another direction.

"I don't know how it is," continued Will, "but I feels very queer this mornin'—very queer. I don't remember as ever I felt so badly afore. I tried to go to work, but I couldn't manage it, and so I gived in, at last."

"What is it ails you?" asked Mary, though without raising her eyes.

"It's a sickness, and a sharp crunchin' pain, as nothin' seems to stop. I'm goin' to lay down a bit; but I thought first I'd just look in, and see if you're inclined to be friends."

"I'm neither friends or enemies."

"You're hankerin' arter them parsons yet, then—as if a Registrar wasn't just as good. But that's what you'll come to, I doubt, when you comes to your own senses."

"No, I won't," returned Mary, vehemently—"never, never! If I'm to be a wife, I'll be a right one, a married one, or I'll stop as I am. Break off, if you likes—go—I don't want you. I don't care about you now."

Will, whose great failing was obstinacy, though Mary had really inspired him with a sincere affection, made a movement as if he would obey; but, on rising, sank back powerless. Instantly forgetting resentment, Mary flew to his assistance with a cry heard through the court. Tom, who had been out all the morning, endeavouring to procure some employment, at this moment came in; and they lifted the sick man on to the bed. There was a blue mark on his face—the plague mark!

CHAPTER XII.

A STRANGE thing it is—that woman's love, that patient, long-suffering and abiding affection, which, in prosperity and adversity, in danger, in privation, is still ever the same! What courage does it not inspire, what consolation administer, amidst the rubs, the struggles, the storms of life! And never—no! not at any time, or in any place, is it so touchingly, so signally displayed, as in the dwellings of the poor.

Mary, wronged in the feelings which her sex most prizes, thwarted and opposed in the nearest wish of her heart, yet watched

severe trial was past; the disor
its virulence; and his vigorous c
began to rally.

"Well, I think as I'll get over i
Mary," he said, awaking from a
sleep. "I feel to-day, as if I was
dead men, yet—I'm gettin' better
God."

"Yes, do thank God—I'm gl
you do," remarked a voice: it
Ruth's clergyman.

"Ah! sir, is that you?" said W
up. "You've been very good to
you have, knowin' as we've got th
here. I haven't been able to thank

when I was hearty and strong, it could come on my ear so pleasant."

"Your illness will prove a blessing, if it impresses this upon you. But should you forget such a lesson, you had better never have learnt it."

"That's what we don't think on, your reverence, till we're under orders to march," observed Tom, for the first time since Ruth's death showing an inclination to converse. "It's like a soldier comin' to parade, and, when he's inspected, he can't show half his necessaries. Then, there's a report agen him, in course, and he knows what to expect: he'll be for punishment."

"I hope, my friend, no one here will be in that position, when called to their great account," said the Clergyman.

"I hope not, your reverence, but we're in a hard country, sir, and once let go discipline, it isn't always easy to get right again."

"I don't know, as to that," observed Will;

"but I'll own as I've been for a good bit goin' on queer, though may be it was partly for want of bein' told better. I've been like the man you was speakin' on, sir, as saw somethin' wrong in his brother's eye, and didn't know as he'd got it worse himself. That's what it comes to."

"That is a fault with us all—a radical fault," rejoined the Clergyman. "But for this, the world would know little of the wrong, and the violence, that now lacerate and rend it. But for this, there would have been no Cain—no Lucifer."

Will, to judge from his looks, was deeply impressed by these remarks, but made no reply, and the conversation dropped. Next day he was so far recovered as to be able to leave his bed, though, being much reduced, and still needing a nurse, Mary would not hear of his going home.

"In a day or two you'll be gettin' strong, and then you can look to yourself," she said,

when, after sitting some time in silence, he named it to her, as they sat together alone, both Millicent and Tom having gone out.

"It will be a good bit yet afore I gets strong," replied Will; "though I hope, if I keeps on mendin', I'll soon be able to go to work. But, first and foremost, I must come to a settlin' with you, Mary, consarnin' that-there tiff we had, and now I believes you was in the right on't. What ha' you got to say now?"

"Nothin'," answered Mary, not disinclined, now the danger was past, to show a little pique.

"It's no use pretendin' you don't mind about me," returned Will, though his lip twitched nervously: "no use at all, arter your takin' care on me so, so don't you put it on."

"*Me* put it on! It was you, I think—you, who followed and pestered me, whenever I stirred out o' doors, till you got me to

say I'd keep company, and then you begins about a registrar. I don't know anythin' about registrars, not I, nor don't want to. I knows my mother was married in a Church, though she was a poor woman all her life; and I'll be the same."

"And who says again it? I don't! I wasn't for puttin' money in the pocket of a parson, when it could be done without, if you'd only been agreeable. But it's no good talkin' any more on it. It wasn't the Church as I had a objection to, but the parsons."

"It's all as one," answered Mary, poutingly.

"But I ain't again the parsons now," cried Will—"leastways, not again all on 'em. I didn't know as there were any went among the poor in time of sickness, like this one, comfortin' and cheerin' on us, and maybe lendin' a helpin' hand. Now I do! I've found out as there's good among 'em, the same as among all sorts—men as don't always stand up only for the masters, whether they're

right or wrong, but who's got pity and feelin' for the poor. That's why I've changed my mind, Mary—that's why I says, as soon as you gets over your trouble, we'll be married in Church, if you'll have me; and I'll pay the fees to such a man with right good will."

"No, you won't."

"And why not?"

"Because there'll be none to pay. *He* don't charge for marryin' the poor—this one don't."*

"Don't charge!" exclaimed Will, with a look of astonishment. "*And he's a parson!*"

* This pious practice is not without parallel, the same thing being constantly done by the benevolent Vicar of Clerkenwell, who in one week married ninety poor couples gratuitously.

CHAPTER XIII.

A GLEAM of light began to appear in wh[illegible]a had been the weaver's home. The Spita[illegible]al-fields loom, so long lying idle, now at lengt[illegible]th showed transient signs of activity, and, we[illegible]ll known as a dexterous hand, Mary procure[illegible]d employment as a winder; Tom, left to peris[illegible]h by his country, after losing his health an[illegible]d limbs in her service found a good Samarita[illegible]

vision. Will Kingston recovered rapidly, and, satisfied that there existed at least one good parson, took a delight in attending Church, while he spent his little leisure with Mary, after the toil and fatigue of the day, at her own home, instead of taking her to such vicious and loathsome haunts as the penny theatre and Zoar Chapel.

All this time Millicent continued to drudge uncomplainingly. Every day she rose with the light, calm and resigned, and, like poor Luke, then took the only exercise her situation would admit of. But toil, confinement, and incessant anxiety told severely on her appearance, and her face, once so blooming, became extremely pale, though retaining its soft and touching beauty. Her eye no longer sparkled with vivacity, but in saddest moments, it gave forth a mild, chastened light, according well with her quiet, retiring, and subdued spirit. And she pursued her appointed way without murmuring, without

repining—with no solicitude but how to provide for the frugal wants of the morrow, and fulfil the duties of to-day.

It is said to be the natural, inherent tendency of man to sink with circumstances, to fall with the tide and rush of reverses, to the fickle level of his fortune. It may happen so, and undoubtedly does, in many cases, but it is not an invariable and inevitable consequence. And, certainly, to lie on the wave, to float tranquilly along, is not to be engulfed. Xerxes was none the more a victor because he lashed the sea.

And so it was with Millicent! Though yielding to her fate, it had not overwhelmed, it could not degrade her. She even felt greater, better in her patience, her submis-

received a large order, she happened, in looking round, to catch a glimpse of a person on the opposite side of the way, whose appearance put every other idea to flight. It was Vavasour.

They exchanged only one glance, but that, far as they were apart, electrified Millicent. Her head grew giddy, her brain whirled, her very sight seemed to fail: yet, rallying, she hastened down the street, hardly heeding whither she went, and thinking only how to escape. At last, after a circuitous flight, she reached home, breathless.

Fortunately, as both Tom and Mary were out, there was no one to observe her, and she sank into a chair, scarcely seeking to soothe herself. What a torrent of recollections, what a flood of almost forgotten feelings, came pouring upon her, strong, untameable—deadening every whisper of consolation. He had seen her! seen her in her abject unmistakable misery, in her destitution; and

that look, brief as it was, showed with what pain, what wonder! Never before had she felt the bitter humiliation of poverty so intensely. Great her sufferings had been, but they were secret: now when she was inured to them, when they had become almost natural, they were dragged to light. Above all, they were exposed to *him!*

Scarcely less acute, though far different, was the emotion of Vavasour, as, with the foreknowledge of her altered fortune, he read in her dejected appearance the sad tale of her sorrows. To him there was degradation in such complete and unmitigated penury. He could not understand that it purified, ennobled—that a meek endurance of its burden was the highest flight, the most rare achievement of heroism—a sublime spectacle, pronounced by the fine old heathen worthy of the gods.

Vavasour was the creature of effect—one of those with whom the tinsel of outward

circumstances is so imposing, that it diminishes or extenuates innate deficiencies. From the very first unable to conquer repugnance to Millicent's ignoble origin, he had still, on seeing her surrounded with every accessory of wealth, courted and caressed by people of the highest distinction, and admired by all —he had, by force of example, under the influence of these manifestations, been brought to bear with it. But now the case was widely different. The gulf between them was indeed impassable, immeasurable. His eyes were opened.

Still he followed her—on, on, through every street, and dirty, fœtid lane, and filthy court. At each step the dark passions of his nature became more turbulent, the impulse that urged him forward more corrupt. And on every side emblems of undisguised misery, surpassing the grasp of imagination, rose up, tempters and destroyers, to whisper evil communications to his heart. Thicker

and darker they came upon him, and if on him, possessing everything the world could give, how much more on those who lived continually amidst them, untutored, desperate, their progeny and their victims!

It was not only that he loved Millicent—loved, that is, so far as inordinate self-esteem would permit: not only that he was fascinated, dazzled; but his wounded pride still smarted under the recollection that she had repulsed and rejected him. This had rankled in his mind like a cancer, infecting every thought, from the moment he had last seen her; and even the conviction that she secretly loved him, though never lost sight of, had failed to render it supportable. But now he would be righted, avenged! In her destitution, in her despair, she would look upon him with other eyes,—cling, submit to him, hail him as a deliverer, claim him as a protector.

Full of these thoughts, he arrived at her

miserable home, at which, on entering the court, he had seen her disappear; and, after a moment's pause, gave a low knock at the door. A voice answered from within — a soft, sweet, mournful voice, that stirred every chord of his heart. He opened the door, and stood face to face with her he sought.

Millicent uttered an exclamation, and drew back.

"It *is* Miss Rennel, then?" cried Vavasour, feelingly, though his eye beamed triumph. "I thought I was not mistaken!"

Millicent bent coldly.—"To what circumstance am I indebted for your visit, sir, may I ask?" she said, in a tremulous voice.

"And *can* you ask?" returned Vavasour, reproachfully. "Is the past so dead in your memory—so utterly, totally obliterated, that my visit should seem unaccountable? No, I will not believe it! Your looks, your tears, tell me no! It is vain to profess an indifference you cannot feel."

"And I do *not* profess it, sir—I acknowledge the past is dear to me, and impressed only too fondly on my memory; but it is as a dream. Look around, sir, since you have come here—look at these bare walls, this scanty and wretched furniture, this squalid abode, and say if I have indeed anything left to connect me with the past."—And she covered her face with her hands.

"You have suffered fearfully. I am confounded to think how much, and how long. But you must now leave this place—yes, instantly leave it."

Millicent, too distressed to speak, shook her head.

"It must be, Miss Rennel. I have a claim, a right, to say so."

"Have I not?" he asked: "a twofold right! first, as nephew of Mrs. Grantley; secondly, as your friend, your—your lover."

Millicent slightly moved.

"Yes, Millicent—for so I will, so I must call you, I am still yours, though my love has been slighted, my devotion contemned by you."

"No! no!" said Millicent, almost inaudibly: "they have not!"

"And *are* they not!" cried Vavasour. "Oh! say they are not: say you value and accept them."

"You ask from me what I cannot do, sir. I speak only of the past—that past which you have invoked, and in which alone I can know you. Reflect a moment, and you will, I am sure, acknowledge you have no cause to complain of me. I have met your addresses, not, as you seem to think, with coldness, but with the respect they claimed, remembering, as so near a relation of Mrs.

Grantley, you had a most strong claim upon me. And this I recognise now, when I clear myself of your charge; for it is my consolation that I act as she would approve."

"Would she approve of your being here? of your herding, on terms of equality, with the refuse, the scum of society? You are startled, but it is necessary I should awaken you, even at the cost of a pang. And you have given no answer to my question! I will not again ask it as a right, but beg it as a boon, as a favour. I wish you to think of me, Millicent, only as Sidney Vavasour. Your memory, in which I trusted so much, will not befriend me: so I appeal to your heart."

"And for what? Could I even bring myself to listen to you, would you have me bring ruin on you, as well as entail years of remorse on myself? You know there is a bar between us which I cannot remove."

"You mean my father, and are daunted by his mad threat. But this, as I half thought at the time, is a delusion. The patrimony of the family cannot be diverted from me. Say you will accept me, and it shall be yours."

Millicent gave a quick glance up, but instantly her eyes dropped again.

"Think, think!" pursued Vavasour, drawing to her side. "In place of this loathsome hole I will give you a palace: instead of this reeking floor, the softest carpets of Persia, the richest velvets, shall be spread under your feet. Servants shall fly to obey your slightest wish; matchless horses shall draw your carriage; your dress shall flash with gems. Speak, then, Millicent"—and he took her hand—"speak, dear Millicent, and command every gift, every luxury, every pleasure the world can afford."

"These are not what I seek," said Millicent, in tremulous accents, and endeavour-

ing, though very gently, to withdraw her hand.

"No, you love me—love me for myself," said Vavasour, passionately, though in tones low and subdued. "Do not conceal it, dear Millicent, when that blush, those eyes, tell me plainly it is so. Oh! come, come! What is the world to us, with its ceremonies, its cold restraints? Our love is holy of itself, and needs no prating priest to sanctify it."—His voice had fallen to a whisper; but it rang on her heart like a thunderbolt.

She gave him one look—such a look! and then, shuddering, recoiling, pale as ashes, drew herself from him.

In an instant he seemed paralysed—the strong, haughty, inflexible man bent and crushed. But it was too late.

"Go—leave me," she said, pointing to the door. "I spurn you."

He was gone, and rent with conflicting feelings, she sank insensible on the floor.

CHAPTER XIV.

Opening her eyes, Millicent found a kind face bending over her, watching anxiously for some return of animation. It was Tom's.

"Ah! you're comin' to now!" said the poor soldier; "I thought as you was gone, when I first see you. How was you took?"

"It seized me all at once—a swimming, blinding dizziness, and I fell down," replied Millicent.

"I'll tell you what it is: you sticks too close to work. You're goin' on too fast. It won't do. You must give yourself a little rest."

"I can't just now," said Millicent, willing he should explain the occurrence in his own way, "for I received an order this morning, which I must execute immediately. Indeed, I must remain up all night, or it will not be finished in time."

"You'll kill yourself. I'd let the work go for once, and look to my health."

Millicent smiled—a smile so sad, it dimmed poor Tom's eyes.

"I won't let you do it," he said, taking up her implements from the table. "It's like murder, and I'll go to the shop, and tell 'em so. Here, Mary," he continued, his sister at this moment entering, "she's talkin' of settin' up all night, and she's hardly able to go about."

"Then, she sha'n't do no such thing," cried Mary, "and for a very good reason, as I've heard of somethin' more profitable—a nice little job, that will be no labour, and won't take long."

"I tell you, she can't do anythin'," cried Tom. "I just picked her up off the floor, in a reg'lar swound."

"In a swound?" said Mary, gazing in Millicent's face.

"Oh! it was nothing—a mere momentary feeling," said Millicent. "I am quite well now."

Mary shook her head.—"No, no, you looks too sadly for that," she replied. "But anyway, dear, you can do what I mentioned, and it 'ull be a change for you. It's only to go to a lady out of town a little way, for Mrs. Lightfoot. Her measurer's got the chol'ra: and you're to take the lady a dress she's ordered. Mrs. Lightfoot's got so many sick, it 'ull be quite a favour, she says, if you goes."

"How can I, Mary, when I have engaged myself?"

"But you're too ill to work."

"Yes," urged Tom, "and I've offered to go and get her off it."

"I'll settle all that, never fear," returned Mary. "You sit down, Millicent, and I'll make you a cup of tea; and then, if you feels better, we'll set off together."

"But, dear Mary——"

"Now, what's the use of talkin'? You know you couldn't sit up all night, as you said you'd have to."

"I'm afraid not, after what has happened —I mean, this fainting-fit; but my half promise was given before."

"Well, you finds you can't do it, and that ends it. To make your mind easy, I'll clear you at the shop."

The reasoning was unanswerable; and Millicent, but too sensible of weakness, reluctantly acquiesced, hoping the change would really be beneficial, and divert her thoughts from Vavasour. Soon she was on her way

to Mrs. Lightfoot, and having received her instructions, started for Stratford-le-Bow, where the lady she was to attend resided.

It may seem strange that, with her warm, deep, and devoted feelings, she could so speedily and easily rally from her recent utter depression; and, truth to say, it was not without a mighty struggle, such as only woman could compass. The poor, fluttering heart was at first ready to break, but its power of enduring, its habits of subjection, its severe self-control, then in an instant revived, and at once corrected, restrained, soothed. A long period of adversity, too, had brought her, by its stern teachings, to subdue those restless feelings of tenderness Vavasour had inspired, keeping before her the conviction that her attachment was utterly hopeless. Rarely had she suffered herself to think of him, to remember him; and now, hurt in her most sacred perceptions, she felt more than ever he must be forgotten. She

must pluck him from her heart — wholly, for ever, not in obedience to the evil suggestions of anger, which for the moment even her meek nature could not completely silence, but at the calm bidding of honour, principle, duty. To help her resolution, she contemplated his character in its perversion and its deformity; she recalled the coarse and insulting language of his father; she thought of his vicious, inordinate self-love, of her own forbearance and submission. But with all this, he was not to be rooted out of her affections in an hour, or in a day.

Weary and sad, she reached Stratford, and though not without difficulty—for it was very secluded—made out the villa where she was to call. She disclosed her errand to the servant, and was informed in reply that

am ordered to see if the dress is approved of."

"Oh, it will do, I dare say," returned the servant, carelessly. "Mrs. Charlton doesn't mind much about dresses, and no doubt master ordered it. She thinks of something else, poor lady."

"But, perhaps, if you would just say the dressmaker is here, she would admit me."

"Well, I'll let her know. But she never sees anybody."

Millicent, fearing she would be unable to accomplish her mission, waited the result with some anxiety. After a moment's interval, however, the servant returned, and conducted her to her mistress, who, to Millicent's amazement, proved to be Helen Belwood.

CHAPTER XV.

Helen's explanation respecting the bracelets found in possession of the quondam Doll Stukely, and which led to the arrest and judicial examination of Doll and her partner, had made Belwood acquainted with her secret terrors — and, by means of these, enabled him to rule her with despotic sway. His first object was to induce her to leave the neighbourhood, where, as every little incident, however private it might be kept, soon became a public topic, he was in constant dread that some fortuitous circumstance would divulge their marriage; and, to elude

inquiries, he contrived to give her departure the appearance of an elopement. From that time she had resided at Stratford, in the utmost seclusion, and, to increase her distress, she was frequently months without seeing, or even hearing of Belwood.

It was in her dressing-room she received Millicent, whom she recognised immediately, with mingled surprise and joy.

"How strange we should meet here!" she continued. "I thought I was never to see a friend's face again."

"You have been living very retired, then?" replied Millicent, at a loss what to say.

"So much so," returned Helen, sadly, "that I believe no one but my husband knows where I am. I left Staffordshire soon after I last saw you."

"Indeed. And do you like living so quiet, so much alone? I fear it cannot be good for you."

"Oh! that would be of little consequence if I had no other grief. But I shall say nothing of this, as I am sure, from your altered looks, you have had troubles enough of your own."

"I must not complain, for, indeed, I have suffered little in comparison with others. But I had hoped you——" She suddenly paused, recollecting, with her usual delicacy, that what she was about to say might give Helen pain.

"You thought, perhaps, I should be happy ere now," said Helen, a faint colour tinging her cheek. "I fear, from what I have experienced already, that is not to be on earth. But you will understand all, when I tell you my marriage is still unavowed, and that this

himself for long intervals, from fear of exciting remark."

"How sad for you! And is he not unjust, when such consequences ensue, to persist in keeping such a dreadful secret?"

"Ah! he is my husband, you know!" pleaded Helen, deprecatingly.

"Yes, and I will say nothing against him; for, after all, who can tell, without knowing the whole of the circumstances, that he has not ample reason for silence. Indeed, I am the more inclined to believe kindly of him, as he is not the person I first thought. I once feared—forgive my apprehensions for you!—I once feared he was Mr. Belwood."

"Feared!—why say, feared?"

"Because I have no trust, no confidence, in Mr. Belwood. I would not say so before; but, believe me, it has taken a weight from my heart to find your name is Charlton."

Helen looked the picture of despair.—

"That is an assumed name," she said, in a suffocating voice.

"And I have distressed, wounded you!" cried Millicent, deeply distressed.

"Then I am sure it was not your intention," said Helen, embracing her. "Still I would not have you severe on my cousin, any more than my husband; and I hope you may find yourself mistaken. But who is this?"—there was a loud knock at the door as she spoke. "Surely it must be him!"

"What, Mr. Belwood?"

"Yes."

"How unfortunate! It would make me so wretched to meet him! Can I not leave the house without being seen?"

"I will try and contrive it, if you wait here a short time, while I go down stairs and see him."

"But he is coming up!" said Millicent,

distractedly. "That is his step!" And she looked round for a place of concealment.

Helen, bewildered by a difficulty so unexpected, had no power to interpose; and before she could speak, Millicent flew into an adjacent wardrobe, and drew the door behind her. At the same moment, Belwood entered.

"Well, am I an owl, or what, that you fix your eyes on me so wildly?" he cried, throwing himself into a chair. "One might think I was Banquo's ghost, instead of flesh and sinews. What's the matter now?"

"You've come so unexpectedly, dear Charles," replied Helen, meekly, and, forgetting, in her alarm, the proximity of Millicent. "You know, you always write to prepare me."

"And more fool I! I had better have prepared you for something else—for something I have long foreseen, and which has now come to pass. I am ruined!"

"Oh! Charles! is this true?"

"So true, that if I am not helped by a miracle, I shall soon be in prison. Everything is gone, to the very rug under your feet!"

"Let them take all we possess, if they leave you at liberty. And, dear Charles, if you think yourself in danger, why do you not fly, while there is yet time? Oh! let us be gone instantly."

"Thank you, I'll go by myself, when I've made up my mind. But this needn't detain you; and, in fact, I wish you to set off at once. You must go to America."

"Alone, Charles?"

"Yes, why not? I must do what I can for myself, and get away how I can. You have the world before you. Go, and leave me to my fate."

"No, I will stop and share it. Oh! suffer me, dear Charles, by the love you once felt for me; and whatever my portion may be,

whatever I may be called upon to endure, no word, no syllable of complaint, shall ever escape me."

"You are very obliging, certainly; but, as the case stands, your presence is not so desirable as you suppose. Indeed, to let you into a secret, it will be a positive bore. So, pray, put aside all scruples, get your things together, and to-morrow morning take the first train for Liverpool, where a packet is just ready to sail. Here is a note for a hundred pounds, all I can scrape up for you; and, in America, it will be enough to give you a start."

"It is cruel to say this to me—to drive me away from you, after the sacrifices I have made to be with you. Do not, do not persist in it, or you will kill me."

"I only wish I could. What do you mean? What do you want of me? I have come here a broken, desperate man, with a gaol staring me in the face, to give you

almost the last farthing I can command—to look to your safety, your comfort, and yet you will not be guided by me. You oppose me, thwart me!"

"No, no, dear Charles! but——"

"Oh! hang your buts! I have no time to stay here, debating and cavilling. I tell you, the persons I have to deal with, unfortunately for me, will not listen to arguments, and, having nothing else to offer them, I must get out of the way. So the whole matter resolves itself into this—will you, or will you not, do what I wish?"

"Oh! think, think, what you ask of me! consider me a little, Charles, and you shall find I will ever be mindful of it. Let me stay, and in the worst adversity, in a cellar, in a prison, I will still be your faithful, devoted wife."

"Wife, indeed! Ha! ha! Lay not that flattering unction to your soul, I beg. You are no wife of mine!"

"Not your wife!"

"No!"—and he uttered a fearful imprecation: "a hundred times no!"

Millicent, who overheard their discourse, with feelings not to be described, was almost betrayed by these words into an exclamation of despair, for a moment quite forgetting her situation. Then, by a strange instinct—for her ears had been stopped, she knew that some one had struck a blow; she heard a heavy step move off, and the door slam violently: Belwood had gone!

Helen was leaning against the wall, her mouth streaming blood.

"Are you much hurt, dear?" said Millicent, tenderly, without asking how it had happened.

"Not much, and I provoked him, I dare say," replied Helen, convulsively. "He did not, he could not, mean what he said."

"Compose yourself, and you will be better

able to reflect," answered Millicent, wiping the blood from her mouth.

"You see, he is in great trouble, and it makes him irritable—desperate, as he said," pursued Helen. "He can't bear to be crossed, and I was obstinate, though in truth, I would do anything else he desired. But I must not think; for things crowd on me now, in such a whirl, that it would take my senses away, if I were to brood over them."

"But you *must* think, dear, you must, indeed. You may possibly be the victim of a wicked deception."

and with her right estimate of Belwood's character, divest herself of an apprehension that Helen had been imposed upon, and that the ceremony she considered a marriage was in some way invalid.

"You still fear!" said Helen, laying a tremulous hand on her arm. "Listen, and I will tell you how it was."

"Pray do, if it will not distress you," replied Millicent.

"No, it will be a relief, a comfort to me; for this secrecy has made my affliction more intense. Now, a few words will divulge the bitter, corroding sorrow of years—and it has lain on my heart like a weight, crushing every energy. I will not speak of the fond and happy days when he loved me—when, as he too easily persuaded me to believe, I was the light of his eyes, the hope and the aim of his life. This would open fresh wounds, and, besides, is a thrice-told tale. I will spare you

so much, and come to the fatal day which sealed my doom."

But tears, desired so long in vain, rose unbidden at these recollections, and for a moment prevented the recital: then, however, she resumed.

"We had accompanied my uncle to Scotland, on a tour through the country; and, as he was still partly occupied with business, we were thrown much together. You probably do not know that marriage there is a civil contract, requiring no form, and, indeed, nothing but the presence of a witness.

"Yes! I may confide to you, after what has occurred, that measures were taken at the time to mislead me as to the place where it was solemnized, but happily they did not succeed. This, however, I kept to myself, and, to remove all doubt, obtained a certificate of our union. Can further proof be necessary?"

"No; and what you have said cheers and reassures me. But may I still ask one question?—do you intend, in spite of all this, to comply with Mr. Belwood's wish that you should go to America?"

"I would rather, not—indeed, something tells me I ought not. But counsel me, dear Millicent. What would you recommend me to do?"

"Since you have asked me, I will own that I think you should by no means go, unless he accompanies you. And pardon my interference, but I hope you will be firm on

that point. I cannot help believing it is the most serious act of your life."

Still, Helen hesitated; and it was long before Millicent, urging again and again the many cogent reasons for decision, could bring her to concur in her views. At last, she was but too well convinced, though not till Millicent revealed all her misgivings, disclosing indeed a dark glimpse of Belwood's character, and of the objects he possibly contemplated. Then with a mind lightened by Helen's resolve, she went away, leaving her poor friend more calm, and promising to repeat

CHAPTER XVI.

On the day after Millicent's meeting with Helen, an elegant and sumptuous carriage made its appearance in the narrow, dirty streets of Spitalfields, to the utter astonishment of the denizens, who, in that remote dependency, had as little acquaintance with such spectacles as Gulliver's Hhonnwyms. A gang of vagrant, ragged, shoeless urchins, who might truly have passed for youthful Yahoos, startled from play by an incident so novel, followed in hot pursuit, shouting and

hurrahing, and evidently considering that a new epoch was at hand.

The carriage contained a lady and gentleman, both of whom were absorbed in thought; but the lady, as if fearing observation, crouched back in her seat, while her companion kept his eye fixed on the window, though, in plain truth, his attention seemed elsewhere. Suddenly he pulled the check-string, and the coachman stopped.

"Is it here, Lord Childars?" cried the lady, with a wondering look.

"Yes," replied the nobleman.

"Oh, perfectly. You enter the court by this archway, and she lives in the last house on the right."

"Poor, dear Milly. But I shall find it, I have no doubt; and her sufferings will now come to an end."

"I will leave you, then," said the nobleman. "She would only be pained to see I know of it, and you will do better without me."

They parted, and, while Lord Childars walked quickly away, the lady, with slower steps, but a look equally troubled, passed into the court.

Millicent, as usual at that hour, was alone, and engaged with her flowers, when a tremulous knock called her to the door, and opening it, she confronted her visitor. In a moment they were in each other's arms.

"Dear Fanny, how kind, how good to come to me!" exclaimed Millicent. "I knew you would think of me some day."

and I am so happy now, too!
have lost this meeting for worlds

"But to find you in such a
Milly," cried Fanny. "It is so
horrible!"—And still weeping, sh
head on Millicent's bosom, as i
look round.

"It is strange to you, no doubt
Millicent, "for it affected me e
but now, from being here so long
has worn off. And there are w
Fanny—far, far worse, and
asylum and home here, when I
perish."

"My

me, Milly! When I see your dear, sweet face so gentle, so patient, as if nothing whatever had happened, and then think what you have undergone, my heart bleeds, dear Milly: it seems ready to break!"

"You are a very, very dear Fanny, I know. But now we will say no more of this. You shall sit down and tell me all your news; for I am sure you have a whole budget. And to be candid, I intend to be very fierce with you, Miss Fanny, on one point. How is it you have never answered my letters?"

"I never received them till a month ago, since which, though you left no clue to your retreat, we have done everything we possibly could to find you out. The Judge has even advertised for you, and Oswald and I have gone about every day, in every possible place, hunting and inquiring for you of everybody; but without success. It was only this morning I heard where you were."

"And how did you make the happy discovery at last?"

"Oh, I do not intend to divulge that—at least, not at present. But some one saw you, and some one followed you, and some one came and told me. So now you know everything."

"How can you say so, when you have not told me who *some one* is?"

"That is a secret, and I will not have you ask any questions. It is really not fair of you, knowing how you coax, and wheedle, and bewitch one with that winning voice of yours, till you make everybody do as you like. And now you smile!—dear, dear Milly, I could almost tell you for that smile!"

"Then, tell me directly. And yet"—and suddenly the smile on her face vanished, like sunshine under a cloud—"yes, you must answer me one question, Fanny. Was your informant Mr. Vavasour?"

"No! But why, above all others, do you fix on him? Was he aware of your being here?"

"Only since yesterday, I believe," replied Millicent, much relieved, "and I thought, from that, he might have apprised you of it. But, I see, I must let you take your own time for disclosing who it was; so I will say no more."

"You had much better not, for I shall only lead you into a maze, from which there will be no escaping. Indeed, all you have to do now, if I am to have any say in the matter, is to jump into my carriage, and come away directly to Belgravia, where, I promise beforehand, you shall be as happy as a queen."

"I am sure you will try and make me so, and I accept your invitation, as you offer it, most cordially. But I cannot go away with you now, as I have arrangements to make before I leave."

"Then you will come to dinner this evening?—you must, positively; I will not wait a moment longer."

"I will try—well, I will even promise, then. But you must let me make a stipulation, first?"

"What is it?"

"That you will interest yourself to procure me a situation somewhere, as governess or companion, and allow me to leave you as soon as I obtain one."

"Oh, yes, to be sure, and very glad shall I be to get rid of you. So we have settled that."

"Yes, with this protest, that your laughing is not to be considered, or interpreted, or explained, in time to come, as any right or reservation on your part to infringe the treaty."

"And so the high contracting parties embrace!" said Fanny, as, with something of

her natural gaiety, she drew Millicent to her bosom.

They continued to converse for some time, happy in renewed intercourse, happy in the welcome thought that the days of adversity were over. It could not be told in words what joy, what rapture, what fervent and pious thankfulness, the meeting awoke in Millicent's heart, as if, with one so loved and loving at hand, she could brave any trial—as if she had now nothing to dread, everything to hope for.

At length, for the twentieth time, Fanny rose to depart.

"You must let me leave you this," she said, laying a purse in Millicent's hand. "I am sure it will be useful to you just now."

"It will not, believe me," replied Millicent. "I want only a small sum, and though I know you will gladly be my banker, I must not borrow more than I can repay.

So, if you please, I will take what I require and return you the rest."

"Then, we must leave the settlement till another time—for you will, of course, do just as you like, as usual. But I reserve all scoldings till this evening; and now, good-bye!"

Millicent, when her first transports had subsided, was not sorry to be alone, reflecting that she had much to arrange, and but little time remaining. Her chief business was to recover her boxes from Mrs. Grimshaw, in order that, without making any display, she might appear at the Judge's mansion in suitable attire; and fortunately Tom came in at this moment, and, learning her wishes, undertook to go with her to Mrs. Grimshaw, and see that she made restitution.

Tom's presence proved to be very necessary; for Mrs. Grimshaw, with her usual

extortion, sought to enlarge her claim in every possible way; and it was not till Tom threatened to invoke the police, that she could be brought to reasonable terms. At length, all was settled; the boxes were bestowed in a cab; and Millicent was once more their mistress.

Mary, who had by this time come home, could not conceal her grief when she saw her dressed.

"You will leave us now," she said, dejectedly, "after livin' with us such a while, and bein' with us like a sister—like one of ourselves. Oh! it's a sad world; where we're obligated to part, we don't know when, with them we love, and left to struggle alone."

"Not alone," said Millicent. "You will have your husband, Mary, and there is your brother, too, who will be with you always,

and whenever I can, I shall come and see you."

"What, when you're with your great friends, who makes so much of you? Oh, no! you'll forget us, or think of us only like a dream, as is painful to recollect."

"Shall I forget the hand that gave me bread, when I was dying of hunger?" said Millicent, reproachfully, and pressing Mary's fingers to her lips. "No, Mary! not while I can remember anything! not while I have feeling and life! My great friends, as you call them, have indeed been kind, but what is their kindness to that I have received from you—from friends who gave me what they needed only too much themselves."—And throwing herself on Mary's bosom, she remained locked in her embrace.

Most kindly was she welcomed, on arriving in Belgrave-square, by Fanny, who, in-

deed, now she had seen her demeanour in adversity, regarded her, if possible, with even increased tenderness and admiration. The Judge and Oswald received her with equal cordiality, and with hardly less affection.

Millicent's heart beat proudly as, seated at Fanny's side, she found herself again in that sphere of society so long her own, and the refinements of which she could so fully appreciate. It was like rising from the tomb—coming out of the house of bondage, and entering a fruitful and blessed Canaan. Life was once more sweet, precious. It gave her a name, a hope, and a mission.

"I have been quite in the way of meeting old friends to-day," remarked Fanny. "Who do you think I saw this morning, Milly?"

"I cannot guess: you must tell me."

"Yes, yes, we give it up," said Oswald, with a bantering smile, "for we see you are dying to tell."

me," said Sir Charles. "As f
can see his ears are tingling, th
affect indifference."

Oswald looked penitent, mal
laugh.

"Well, Milly," said Fanny,
old governess, Susan—now call
you think?—Mrs. Firebrass Dc

"Is that the Tractarian?"
Charles.

"Tractarian!" echoed Millice
ment.

"Yes," answered Fanny. "
changed, Milly—so changed.

"I shall be very happy."

"Pray don't," urged Oswald, "or I shall expect to hear of your being con—or should I not say *per*verted?"

"Oh! I have no fear of Millicent," said Sir Charles; "let them go."

"That we fully intend to do," cried Fanny.

And, accordingly, next morning, they repaired to Mr. Dobbs's church, which, on entering, they found metamorphosed into a puerile imitation of a Roman Catholic chapel. Millicent was shocked, as she looked round, at the absurd and monstrous decorations, the superstitious symbols, the paltry attempts to impress and awe, which appeared on every side, exciting only derision. Much as was known of these innovations, she was startled to behold, in a parish church of the metropolis, all the details and machinery of Romish worship. But it was Popery without its

imposing solemnity, without its fire. It was the dead body lying in state—decked out in gorgeous trappings, but lacking the soul.

The spirit of Dobbs had indeed undergone a change, and one which, heterodox as were his former opinions, could not be considered for the better. From Scylla he had rushed on Charybdis: after herding with Jack, had come to flirt with Peter. To such extremes do men run, and with such abruptness, making but one stride from Dan to Beersheba!

Calmly and dispassionately viewed, the new theology had charms for Dobbs: it gave him power, spiritual authority, the keys of men's consciences and hearts. It made priestcraft more absolute, more tangible, and increasing daily in knowledge of its capabilities, he became more tenacious of its pretensions. Soon even its champions claimed a share of his love and veneration. He

began to vindicate Thomas à Beckett, and to believe in the meekness and tender charity of Bonner. Poor Anne Boleyn, as the foster mother of schism, became a monster to his Romanised fancy—a Lucrezia, an Agrippina. With equal significance, he whispered mysterious hints of an immaculate Church, one and indivisible, governed and directed by one Shepherd; and this Shepherd, from the prerogatives he ascribed to him, could certainly be no other than his old antagonist the Pope.

The Romanising element, as it has begun to be denominated, appeared more prominently in the service; and Millicent was amazed to see how the simple and impressive liturgy could be perverted into what would have been ridiculous, had it not been profane. The absurd practice called intoning, which cants over the prayers like the street carols at Christmas, grating the ear with its

discordant mutterings, seemed to her but an irreverent mode of approaching the throne of the Almighty, when the soul should be stirred in its deepest and strongest emotions. But the crowning vagary of Mr. Dobbs's doctrine was the rehearsal of the Belief, when, to face the East, he turned his back on the congregation, his heart swelling proudly at its own perverseness. He forgot, deluded man! that the Great Searcher was then looking into it.

Millicent and Fanny were among the last to depart.

"Shall we wait and see Mrs. Dobbs?" asked Fanny, when they reached the porch. "She is following us out, and you know you

"And you tell me meantime, now you have seen the church, what you think of it all," resumed Fanny.

"It has surprised me beyond measure," replied Millicent, gravely.

"Are you inclined to turn Tractarian?"

"Oh! no. I should be sorry to make any comment on the religious opinions of others, but I prefer the worship in which I have been brought up, free from any new observances."

"I cannot say I agree with you there," said Fanny, her less reflective nature not unimpressed by the blandishments of the new creed. "These things, after all, are merely a revival of what was practised by our forefathers. They were the regular usage in the time of Queen Elizabeth."

"But were they so in the time of the Apostles?"

"That is going back a long way. How can we know what was *their* usage?"

"By searching the epistles they have left us, which tell us their inmost thoughts. If these ceremonies are not mentioned there, we may be assured they are unnecessary; and what is unnecessary in religion is, I fear, too often hurtful. Indeed, it seems to me that the worship which the creature pays to the Creator must be simple, or it cannot be heartfelt."

"Then you would do away with all forms, all order?"

"By no means. Order is as essential in the Church as in a household, and there are certain forms, reverent and significant, used from time immemorial, which appear to come spontaneously from the heart. These seem due to divine Majesty, which we cannot ap-

I may have some hopes of converting you, after all. But here is Mrs. Dobbs."

Susan, as she may still be named, looked the same prim, trim figure as in days of old —only there was something more of state in her walk, and she borrowed no little dignity from a huge ebony cross which hung at her side, appended to a cord of beads of the same material. Though a little embarrassed, at first, from a recollection of the circumstances under which they had parted, she was evidently pleased to meet Millicent, discerning quickly that she retained no ill-will.

"This is the first time you have been here, I suppose?" she said, with a benignant smile. "How do you like our church?"

"She thinks you are too Catholic," said Fanny, as Millicent hesitated how to reply.

Susan shook her head, but still smiled: she was enacting the propagandist.

"*Can* we be *too* Catholic, then?" she

asked of Millicent. "I see I must take you under my tuition again. You must come here very, very often."

"I must bring her with me whenever I can," observed Fanny; "for I am sure, when she comes to reflect, she will see reason to change her opinion. Would you like to visit the Sisters of Mercy, Milly?"

"The Sisters of Mercy!" echoed Millicent, surprised. "Who are they?—nuns?"

"Not exactly," answered Fanny, with a puzzled look, "but—well, I suppose they are a sort of nuns?"

"They are what their name implies," said Mrs. Dobbs, with her former bland smile—"persons who have devoted themselves to acts of mercy, spending their lives in visiting, watching, and soothing the sick, and the dying."

"But do they seclude themselves like nuns?" asked Millicent.

"Assuredly," said Mrs. Dobbs.

"And have they taken any vows?"

"A vow of celibacy," replied Mrs. Dobbs, drawing herself up.—The fact was, this vow was quite unnecessary, as the Sisters had all arrived at a green age, and were in every other respect safe.—"But you must come and visit them, as Mrs. Harper proposes," she added, enticingly, "and judge for yourself."

"Thank you, not to-day,' evasively replied Millicent.

"No, not this morning, as I have some calls to make," cried Fanny, "but I shall be delighted any other day. It will be charming. But I hope they live in a kind of convent, or it will spoil all."

"You must come and see," said Mrs. Dobbs. "I shall tell you nothing, but it will be a surprise for you. I am sure Miss Rennel, with her staid, quiet habits, will be very much struck by it."—And, in truth, she had

resolved, if possible, to add Millicent to the establishment, which was sadly in want of young plants, and would thus be furnished with an admirable decoy. But Millicent was not destined to be exposed to her seductions.

After some further conversation, they parted; and the two friends, entering the carriage, returned home, very differently impressed by what they had seen and heard.

" So you are bent on being a governess, Milly ?" said Fanny that evening, when they retired to the drawing-room. " Nothing else will suit you ?"

" I do not say that, Fanny," was the reply, " but it seems the only thing I am adapted for. Can you suggest anything better ?"

some such personage; and set up for an arbitress of fashion. I am sure, if you do, you will have the immediate adhesion of May Fair and Belgravia."

"Become, in fact, quite a Dame Brummel,—a sort of Lady Nash," said Millicent, with a gay smile. "How can you laugh at me so, Fanny?"

"Now you know, in your sly little heart, that I am talking as gravely and soberly as ever I was in my life. You know, too, for all your laughing, that I really wish you to make up your mind to marry a very rich man."

"But will the very rich man make up his mind to marry me, you mercenary thing?"

"Oh, yes! very readily!"

"He must speak for himself, if you please. Proxies are not in use now-a-days."

"He will speak, never fear, when I tell him what you say. And for your comfort,

be it known that he is not only very rich, but very handsome, and, what is more, he is really and actually a lord."

Millicent changed colour.—" We ought not to jest on such a serious subject," she said, " but my Fanny knows we have only been jesting, and that, in reality, my views are very different."

" To wit, having an eye on the aforesaid situation of governess."

" Precisely."

" Well, you must have your own way, I suppose, every one to their taste. But do

if they wish to be happy and fulfil their duty in life, must learn to bear these things; and how could I set up to teach others, if I cannot govern myself?"

"Spoken like my Milly, as it would be borne too, I know; but this shall not prevent my warning you against it. And a book I was reading the other day will be a very good preparation for you, if you continue obstinate. It is Lady Blessington's 'Governess.'"

"A novel?"

"Yes; why not?"

"Oh, I have no objection to make. It would be very amusing, no doubt; and on your recommendation, I shall be very happy to read it. I recollect, you have a passion for novels. Do you remember your adventure with 'Marriage?'"

Fanny, whose memory retained the scene only too vividly, laughed loud and long.

"That *was* an adventure—an adventure worthy of being recorded in the renowned pages of Don Quixote," she cried, at length. "Still, I hope the martyrdom of 'Marriage,' notwithstanding its imposing accessories, did not produce upon you the salutary effect Miss Jumpsen intended. You are not really so good as to discountenance novels."

"I cannot lay claim to such perfection; and, indeed, whatever some ladies may profess, I believe we are all weak on that point. And why should we rail at what entertains and sometimes fascinates us?—what, too, is often made a medium for conveying lessons in the severe discipline of the world, in a form never to be forgotten? It is true, novels

"I am delighted to hear you say so, and you must say it all again, when my uncle comes. You must know he is a heretic on this subject. In fact, Coke upon Lyttleton is his Bulwer Lytton. But here he is; and now, if you muster your arguments, we will convert him; for I think our united eloquence must be irresistible."

"Do not be too sanguine," said Millicent, gaily, as Sir Charles approached. But the contest, fortunately for his consistency, pitted against such powerful odds, was not to take place that night.

"What is all this whispering about?" he cried, placing himself by Millicent. "There is no wicked conspiracy hatching, I hope?"

"That will be all made known by-and-bye, if you have patience," replied Fanny. "But what have you done with Oswald? We must have him here before we begin."

"He is coming directly, then. He is only giving some orders to the coachman."

As he spoke, Oswald entered.

"News! news!" he said, with a strange smile. "Such an event here, for the *Morning Post* to-morrow."

"Then, pray be the *Standard* or *Globe* of to-night," cried Fanny, "and tell us immediately what it is."

"I must, I suppose," laughed Oswald, "for I can't keep anything, and I see you are expiring with curiosity. Well, I have just heard from the coachman that there has been an elopement next door."

Exclamations of surprise broke from his auditors.

"Harriet Clinton," pursued Oswald, "has gone off with Mr. Belwood."

"Did you say Mr. Belwood?" cried Millicent, starting up.

"Even Mr. Belwood. Why are you so interested about him?"

"Because—because he cannot marry her. He is married already."

"Married!"

"Yes, privately married. I know his wife, and saw her only yesterday."

"This must be looked to immediately," said Sir Charles, while Fanny and Oswald sat speechless with astonishment. "I will go and speak to Mrs. Clinton."

And he left the room.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was at the Horticultural Fête at Chiswick, a few hours previously to his visit to Helen, of which Millicent had been an unseen witness, that Belwood, so long baffled by Mrs. Clinton, encountered Harriet. In an instant she slipped away from her stepmother, and joined him.

"I have been watching and following you for months, to obtain this meeting," he said, as he led her into a secluded walk, suppressing for the moment, from regard to his critical position, all trace of the spleen swelling

in his heart, and assuming a tone and manner inexpressibly tender. "You have seen me too, dear Harriet, and you have never tried to speak to me."

"You might have judged from my looks how much I desired it," replied Harriet: "so do not scold me, Charles. If you knew how I have been fettered, you would pity me—I'm sure you would, with your kind heart."

"And am not I to be pitied?—I, who have been longing, dying, to see you, were it only to say a word."

"Have you, though? How good of you!—but you are always so good. And yet I cannot stay with you a moment, dear Charles. I could not have got away at all, only Dud helped me."

"Well, I won't keep you, as you may be missed, and it will excite suspicion. I should ask you to come off with me at once, and be mine for ever, but flying now, in the day-

time, we should be overtaken, and you know what would follow. But can you meet me this evening?"

"No; for we are going to a rout; and Mrs. Clinton, I am sure, will not leave my side. But I could contrive to steal out to-morrow."

"To-morrow it must be, then. At ten o'clock in the evening, I will be at the nearest corner of the Square, and, to avoid observation, will leave the carriage at St. Peter's Church. Then we will set off by the

view, he had already ascertained when the next packet was to sail, and made arrangements for her departure. It has been shown, however, that Helen, on being apprised of his proposal, did not prove so manageable as he had expected.

Still, he could not draw back. His fortunes, so long tottering, had become desperate, and the remedy to be applied must be equally so. He must go on! Of course, his defection—his crime, as the law pronounced it—could not be long concealed from Helen; but her devoted love, which had led her to submit uncomplainingly to so many sacrifices, would still be his safeguard—would prevent her betraying and denouncing him. This was his firm conviction.

Other points of defence were not wanting, should he be driven to resort to them. His marriage with Helen, solemnised at an obscure Scottish village, the very name of which

he had contrived to misrepresent, could never be proved, and thus, even should his expectations of her acquiescence be falsified, would rest solely on her own assertion. Who would credit *that?*—and even supposing the case of its being generally received, what weight would attach to it in a court of justice?

It was with a mind full of these thoughts, that, on the following evening, he repaired to the place arranged with Harriet. In a locality so well supplied with lamps, it was not very dark; and having, in order to make all sure, arrived somewhat before the appointed time, he crossed over to the enclosure, so as not to attract observation, posting himself opposite to Mrs. Clinton's house. At length, it struck ten; and presently the door opened, giving egress to Harriet. She cast one look back; and then, without further hesitation, darted down the steps, and they reached the corner at the same moment.

"This way, dearest," said Belwood, drawing her trembling hand through his arm, as he moved off. "We have not an instant to lose; for, dreading pursuit, I have barely allowed time to secure the train."

"And I fear I have been observed quitting the house," replied Harriet, breathlessly. "Oh! they cannot stop us, can they, Charles?"

"Not if we are once *en route.* And there is the church: we shall have a good start of them."

Soon, indeed, they arrived at the carriage; and, circling her with his arm, Belwood lifted Harriet in, ordering the postilion to set off as he followed her. Away flew Whip, forgetting, in the fervour of the moment, that he was in the domain of the Lord of W——, when the carriage, after a flight of some dozen yards, all at once gave a tremendous

lurch, and came to a dead stop. In vain he lashed and spurred; in vain the horses tugged; there was no moving.

"What's the matter," cried Belwood, with an execration, as he sprang out.

"I'm afraid the axle's broke, sir," answered the postilion, who had just dismounted.

Lord W——, as may be imagined, has many good wishers on these roads, but Belwood's response would have startled him.

"We must have one of the carriage lamps," he said—for they had come into the region of darkness. "If the axle is broken, I hope its maker will be hanged."

"It ain't broke, sir," replied the postilion, glancing the lamp underneath. "I see what it is now—the wheel's got into one of them cursed holes."

"Then, pull on the horses, you idiot."—The postilion, eager as himself, flew to the

horses' heads.—"Now!" cried Belwood.—And with a prodigious effort of strength, he raised the wheel.

"That's it, sir! we'll do now," said the postilion.

"Ten pounds for you if we save the train," returned Belwood.

The carriage shot off; the horses seemed winged. Ruts, holes, jolts and lurches, such as Switzers would shrink from, offered no impediment, and they flew along, without knowing, in the darkness, but what the next moment might be their destruction.

But things speedily changed. Lights flashed across the road, and leaving the Belgravian quicksands, they whirled into Piccadilly. New obstacles now presented themselves; but they still tore on, regardless of passing vehicles and frightened passengers, who, as they glided by, turned to look at them in wonder. Belwood, knowing his fate

might be decided by a single minute, was so engrossed, so absolutely spell-bound, by the excitement of the race, that he scarcely exchanged a word with Harriet, who, unlike him, having rallied from her first alarm, was in high spirits. A silent pressure of her hand, however, or an incoherent word, whenever he was more directly appealed to, amply satisfied her, and she ran on with a thousand expressions of joy and triumph, utterly unconscious that they fell on his ear like air.

They were a strange, a startling contrast at that moment, forming one of those combinations which sometimes give to life the wildness of fiction. Here was the simple, trustful girl, a child in innocence and capacity, a woman in devotion, dowered with the wealth of a Coutts, and with a dower more precious in her heart—latent, undreamt of; giving herself over with her own hand, unreservedly and for ever, to a vicious profligate, a ruined

spendthrift, a criminal; and while she was indulging dreams of a brilliant future, and exulting in her present, he, yet in suspense, with a gaol staring him in the face, and a felon's fears before him, was, under his mask of smiles, in a condition of mind bordering on frenzy. And these two were to be one!

It wanted but a minute to the time when they dashed up to the terminus. The bell, however, had not yet rung, and in a moment the carriage was fixed on a truck and attached to the train. Then, to Belwood's inexpressible relief, the signal was given, and they were off.

About an hour afterwards another carriage arrived at the railway. It contained Mrs. Clinton and a grave-looking gentleman in black, who, finding there would be no other train for Carlisle till morning, succeeded, by the payment of a large sum, on representing the circumstances, in engaging

an engine express. It was some time, however, before it could be got ready, and considering the start secured by the train, and the necessity of making occasional stoppages, in order to prevent collisions, there was no certainty that they would overtake the fugitives.

Morning had spread forth its brightest glories when the train reached Carlisle. Belwood, who had passed the night in feverish anxiety, which all his efforts could not shake off, was the first to spring on the

Belwood, whose ear caught every word, looked round, and perceived at some distance a long line of curling smoke, rushing forward like a rocket. Something at his heart whispered who was there.

Quickly as he bestirred himself, some little time elapsed before they were ready with the carriage. At that instant, the other engine flying up at full speed, arrived at the station.

Belwood's postilion was now in the saddle, and stimulated by the prospect of reward, spared neither whip nor spur. They soon cleared the town, and gaining the high road, where there was no obstacle to their progress, swept along with increased speed.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Clinton, in spite of the most untiring zeal on the part of her companion, encountered obstacles at every step. Everybody seemed to regard her with enmity, and to delight in retarding her. In fact, popular sympathy, without knowing who was

in the right, sided most heartily with the lovers.

At length, they were fairly on the road, but the chase, just before almost in their grasp, was now out of sight, and, indeed, by this time half way to Gretna. Still, Mrs. Clinton urged on the postilion, straining her eyes at every turn of the road, in hopes of catching a glimpse of it. But she was doomed to disappointment. It was not till, climbing the last ascent, they dashed into the one straggling street of Gretna, that the lost chariot presented itself.

They were too late. The marriage, so far as regarded the venerable observances of Gretna Green, was complete; and Belwood and Harriet were refreshing themselves at the inn.

"Under these circumstances, madam," said Mrs. Clinton's companion, who had acquired all the particulars in an incredibly short time,

"you had better remain in the carriage a few minutes, while I go inside."

"Very well," replied Mrs. Clinton, impatiently: "only take care to secure them."

The grave-looking gentleman walked straight to the guest-chamber.

"Ha!" cried Belwood, as he entered. "What is this? How dare you intrude here, sir?"

"I have come for the lady, sir," replied the stranger, glancing at Harriet, who, in an excess of alarm, drew nearer to Belwood.

"This lady, sir," returned Belwood, with a sinister smile, "is my wife. I don't know what you can have to say to her."

"You have married her then?"

"Yes. But before I answer any more interrogatories, I must put one question to you. Pray who and what are you?"

"I am an Inspector of the London police."

Belwood changed colour, but recollecting

himself, assumed a bold look.—" And what is your business with me?" he demanded.

" To take you into custody," was the reply. " You are charged with feloniously intermarrying with Harriet Clinton, your first wife being still alive."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Mrs. Clinton had been apprised of the fact of Belwood's previous marriage by Sir Charles Webster, and, under his advice, took the energetic steps already described. On leaving her, Sir Charles thought to obtain further intelligence from Millicent; but in this, much to his surprise, he was not successful.

"You must not question me on the subject, Sir Charles," she replied, in a tone too gentle to be resisted. "There are circumstances

connected with it, which I am not at liberty to divulge."

"You will get nothing out of her, uncle," cried Fanny. "I have been trying this half hour, without progressing an inch. It is a great secret,—not to be told in Gath."

"Especially to bellmen," observed Oswald.

His insinuation elicited a brisk retort from Fanny, and, in the conflict that ensued, Sir Charles drew Millicent aside.

"My dear girl, you must positively tell me all you know of the business," he said. "If

sure, to withhold information on any other plea. But you must remember I am advising you as a friend, as one who takes the deepest interest in you. I wish to spare you the trouble, and the pain, of having to make these disclosures in a court of justice; and the only means, by which you can do this, after the statement you have made to-night, is to place me in the way of procuring other witnesses. I want to relieve you of all responsibility."

"I fully understand your motive, Sir Charles; and, believe me, am deeply grateful to you. How long can you allow me to consider what is to be done?"

"Three days."

"That will be sufficient. I hope I shall then be able to speak to you unreservedly."

She had, with her usual decision, already made up her mind as to the course she ought to pursue; and next morning, leaving the

house unobserved, she set out for Stratford, to communicate what had occurred to Helen.

On arriving at the little villa, the door was opened for her by Helen herself, who, in consequence of the change in Belwood's circumstances, which he had represented at their last meeting, had discharged the servant, and was now living alone.

Millicent, anxious to spare her feelings, was some time before she could bring herself to the painful errand she came upon,

Helen shook her head.

"I know it does not seem so," pursued Millicent; "but so it is! I have learnt the lesson, dear, from the wisest and best of teachers—experience. You may appear to be sinking; but hope, faith, will hold you up. A gulf may yawn below, billows roll over you; but, at last, that plank will land you safe. It never founders."

"Never? Can we indeed say never, Millicent? Did you know what an extremity I am brought to, you would think differently."

"But I do know, dear, unfortunately, better than yourself. And still in the face of this, with the full consciousness of even a greater trial before you, I say you should hope."

Helen turned a wistful, alarmed look upon her.—"What do you mean?" she said: "something has happened—something you

have heard and wish to break to me."—And she recollected, with a pang, Belwood's announcement that he was in momentary apprehension of arrest. "Oh! have they taken him?" she exclaimed. "Is he in prison?"

"You know what a crime he has committed, then?" said Millicent, misled by her inquiry. "Do not tremble so, dear Helen. The moment has come when you must be firm, resolute. If you would render this second marriage invalid, you must proclaim yourself his wife."

"Let me write for one who will advise and befriend you, for Dr. Thornhill," said Millicent, soothingly. "I am sure he will come to you at once."

"And destroy my husband! Ah, no, Millicent! Never, never! I know what you would say—that it is for my good, for my happiness! What words! I have done with the happiness of this life. I can have no aim now but to screen and save him."

"*Him!* And will you do nothing to save *her?*—the victim, the innocent dupe of his crime! I will not mention the justice you owe to yourself; but oh! Helen! by all your sufferings—by your duty to God and man—spare her a life of cruel sorrow, of sin!"

"I will!—I promise you I will! He shall resign her—set her free, and with legal proofs that she is so. But you must leave it all in my hands. I cannot compromise my husband."

"By no means, if it can possibly be avoided. His guilt is great, but I know it is not you who should denounce him. I am only afraid, dear, that when you are left to the dictates of your own feelings, you will abandon your resolution."

"No, no! I have made up my mind now. Only tell me who she is."

Millicent related all she knew.

"It is well," said Helen. "Come to me the day after to-morrow, and you will no longer doubt my intentions."

CHAPTER XIX.

Belwood, after vainly endeavouring to convince the police-officer that he was mistaken, and so obtain his liberty, was obliged to resign Harriet to the tender care of Mrs. Clinton, and return in custody to town. He arrived in time to be brought up to Marlborough-street that evening, but as little could as yet be adduced against him, it was arranged that the case should be remanded for a few days, and, meanwhile, Belwood be liberated on bail. This he had no difficulty in procuring, and, indeed, the affair was looked

upon, among his numerous acquaintance, as a mere ruse of Mrs. Clinton's, which the proposed investigation would utterly defeat.

Belwood, though he had been confounded by the charge at first, was of the same opinion himself. He still felt assured of Helen's devotion to him, and though unable to comprehend how any inkling of their marriage had got abroad, was confident, on reflection, that no disclosures had been made by her. He must prevent the possibility of her ever being brought to make any. But *how?*

Dark, guilty thoughts came rushing into his mind, like a flood of lava, covering and blasting every vestige of good. He must silence her. His future peace, his safety, almost his life depended on that. It was ... rose the obnoxious,

complishment, had failed; and after having exhausted every persuasion he could think of, without inclining her to view it more favourably, it appeared futile to renew the attempt. But in what other way could he achieve his object? He must try it—*try it first;* and then, if she continued obstinate—if she still refused to be guided by him, another way did remain.

But no! his blood chilled, curdled at the horrid suggestion. He would not think of it! And yet, turn away as he might, recoil, shudder, it was still there—a demon—a besetting fiend, bidding him to its work. He was possessed by it. A dagger floated before him, its handle towards his hand.

As the idea grew more and more familiar, he began to contemplate it with less repugnance. Why, when all the pleasures of life were within reach, should he continue to be hampered and crushed by a hateful incum-

brance? Had not this woman, with her weak, selfish scruples, her misery, her blighting connexion, been a dead weight upon him from the first? And now, when fortune, happiness, were at his feet—when he had the power to resume his position in society, and stand forth among the magnates of the land, he was rather to suffer her to lead him to destruction! The cast was in his own hands.

One crime is the parent of another, as surely as lightning follows the thunder-clap. The evil deed that would reach the light must be masked by something darker. The more Belwood reflected, the more was he convinced, on weighing all the circumstances, that assurance rendered doubly sure was his only safe course. She must leave Europe, or—perish!

It had come to that! And what, after all, did it amount to—what risk did it in-

volve, compared with what was at stake? It was but one step, and that, if taken resolutely, and with proper precautions, would secure everything. In his situation, even discovery would not be worse than inaction, and discovery was the last consequence to be expected. No one, thanks to the measures he had adopted, knew of Helen's retreat, or his connexion with her; and thus no suspicion could fall upon him.

The night was growing late, when, wrapped in a huge pilot-coat, with his face muffled in a scarf, and a travelling-cap pulled over his brow, he presented himself at the villa, and, on knocking, was admitted by Helen.

"How long is it since you have taken to answer the door yourself?" he demanded, as he preceded her into the inner room, in order, though he conjectured the truth, to ascertain

that they were alone. "Where's the servant?"

Helen, in a calm voice, which he could not help thinking unusual, explained the arrangement she had thought it necessary to make.

"I wish you would always act in the same sensible way," returned Belwood, resolved in the first place to try the effect of a little wheedling. "You can be discreet enough when you choose; and, Heaven knows, there was never a time when we had more occasion for discretion."

police-court—that, in fact, at present all was mere rumour, he as quickly discarded it. Still she might have heard, by some means or other, of what had been going on; and though anxious to approach the subject, he was puzzled and embarrassed.

"You're sulking, I suppose?" he said, at length. "You intend to give yourself airs, now I'm down—now I've got the whole world to contend with."

"You cannot think that of me, Charles, when I have done so much to prove my devotion to you, and am ready to do so much more."

"More, are you? Egad, if it's of a piece with what you've done already, I'd rather not have any more. But I don't want to get up a scene. I've been a little too rough with you, I know—rougher than was at all justifiable, and I'm sorry it should have happened

so. I ought not to have raised my hand to you."

"Do not think of that. It was your words that wounded me, Charles. Only unsay those words!"

"What words?—what are you driving at?" said Belwood, though her meaning was plain enough. "If I called you any names, I tell you I regret it. You don't make any allowance for my situation—for my worried feelings. You don't think what a confounded bore it is, in such a state of affairs, to find

"Can you say this deliberately, from your heart, Charles? But I am shunning a subject more important and urgent, which we must come to at last—and why not at once! In a word, I know now why you wish me to leave England."

"Oh! you do?" said Belwood, with feigned sang-froid.

"Yes," was the reply. "I know, too, why you beguiled me into a clandestine marriage, why you induced me to leave the protection of my friends, why you have immured me ever since in seclusion. You wished to repudiate me."

"Indeed!"

"I am willing to leave you, Charles, since you desire it, but let me first secure your safety. I can, and I will save you, but I must also save *her*."

"What the devil are you talking about?"

demanded Belwood, turning purple with anger. "Are you mad, or only dreaming?"

"Neither. I am more composed and more resolved than ever I was before—resolved to act rightfully, though it should cost me my life. You have married Miss Clinton"—Belwood's eyes flashed fire—"you have married her, but she is not your wife. You shall not make her a sacrifice."

Belwood laughed—a demoniacal laugh, which at another time, when unsupported by the strongest feelings of nature, outraged in their most sacred aspirations, would have made Helen shudder.

"Upon my life, this is too good!" he cried. "You think yourself an injured innocent now,

delusions? But it is, perhaps, after all, of little consequence. Miss Clinton, as you are pleased to call her, will not be easily influenced by a cast-off mistress."

A slight tint rose to Helen's cheek, like a shadow on marble, but, beyond that she showed no sign of resentment. "Only let me see you in safety," she said, "and her mind shall be set at rest. I will give her this." And she held out a folded paper.

"Ha!" exclaimed Belwood, stamping his foot, as he perceived, by one furious glance, that it was a certificate of his first marriage. "Hellcat! devil! where did you get that?" And he tore the paper into shreds.

Helen was overpowered by this outburst.

"Oh! do not be so violent!" she exclaimed, sinking on her knee, "you cannot undo what is past, Charles: it is irrevocable. I do not say it to serve myself: I do not think or care for myself. I wish only to

preserve your innocent victim—to preserve you, too—preserve you from heinous, deadly sin."

"Silence!" exclaimed Belwood. "Answer me one question—yes or no! Will you go to America as I proposed, or not?"

"I will go, if you insist upon it; but let me be assured first that you are out of danger. Oh! do not burden me with a new anguish. Do not, after my life of suffering, make me an accomplice in crime."

"In short," said Belwood, slowly, and in a voice hoarse with fury, "you refuse to go?"

"I cannot—I must not go, till——"

But he had flung himself upon her. A cry, which his clenched hand was unable to repress, followed; there was a low, gurgling, thrilling noise; a convulsive throe; and she fell back heavily. A fearful gash in her throat poured forth a pool of blood, clotting her dishevelled hair, and still bosom, just

before swelling with the breath of life. Helen Belwood, so long the prey of despair, rested at last.

Belwood bent over her for a moment—pale, and motionless, and stark as herself. Then, with all a murderer's terrors, he suddenly started up, and darted a glance round. An exclamation of horror broke from him, as, with a pang not to be conceived, he beheld a man peering in at the door.

CHAPTER XX.

DAY was closing, as a gang of convicts, just relieved from labour, crossed over the great square of Woolwich Dockyard, under the

he snatched something from the ground, with such adroitness as to elude observation. Slipping it into his sleeve, he followed the others to a galley lying alongside, in which a marine stood sentry, in order to prevent desertion, and all being seated, the boat pulled off to the hulk.

About four hours afterwards, when night had hung her dark drapery over the earth, the same convict rose noiselessly in his berth, and listening awhile and hearing nothing but sonorous breathings from the occupants of the other beds, took one stride to a grated aperture in the ship's side, by which the dormitory was ventilated. Then, if gusts of wind had not overwhelmed every other sound, a sharp, screeching noise might have been heard, like the action of a file, every now and then checked a little, as if to make sure of attracting no attention, and, this ascertained, as quickly resumed. For hour

after hour the work was continued; and it was not till morning began to rise, like a bather, from the wide, deep river, throwing a twilight glance on the black hull of the hulk, that the sound ceased. By that time the bars of the grating had been cut through; but as it was necessary, now day had broken, to defer any attempt at escape till the following night, they were readjusted, and the interstices filled with soap smudged over with rust, giving an appearance that defied detection.

Another day of rigorous labour, seeming to the anxious expectant more protracted than usual, at length came to a close, and the convicts were once more in their berths. Soon weariness and fatigue closed their eyes, and nothing broke the silence but unmistakable indications of sleep. Then, with the rapidity of thought, the loose bars were plucked from the grating, and a man's head protruded from the port-hole.

The night was perfectly calm. A few scattered white clouds were stretched on the sky, like angels sleeping: but, everywhere else, the vast arch of heaven shone with stars. The broad and majestic Thames, lately the scene of such endless bustle, was now profoundly still—a lake of glass, cradling in its placid basin, ships and craft of every description, all stationary as trees, while their tall gaunt shadows, diving alongside, washed in its depths. On its banks reposed Woolwich, which—for the night was not far advanced—twinkled with numberless lights, though seeming hushed and deserted; yet this tranquil town, nestling like a lamb under the hills, was a forge and storehouse of war, holding in its embrace ten thousand soldiers, moulding in its womb the germs of a navy, resting its granite breast on piles of cannon. The convict scowled as he looked at it; that was his adieu.

Presently there was a splash in the water; and the sentinel on deck, alive to the slightest sound, darted to the gangway. A dark rolling body suddenly rose to the surface, and taking deliberate aim, the soldier fired. Quick as the bullet flew, the fugitive was beyond its reach, striking his course fathoms below. Unencumbered by clothing, his limbs had free play; and the glowing impulses of recovered liberty, after the sufferings of a stern and relentless bondage, gave them a vigour not their own. He again rose to the surface, just as a boat shoved off from the hulk, following the direction he was supposed to have taken. But he was not seen, and anticipating pursuit, he had struck out towards another point. A heavy Irish steamer, which came sluggishly along, blowing like a grampus, favoured his escape, intervening between him and his pursuers. Now, however, the unnatural effort he had wrought himself up to, and so despe-

rately prolonged, became less steady, though he still bore up, and the long, low embankment of the Essex marshes drew nearer and nearer, stimulating fresh exertion. He could now touch the ground, and putting forth all his strength, he reached the shore.

As he emerged from the water, his figure was seen from the boat, which, impelled by its half-dozen oars, came rapidly on. A shout told him he was observed; and naked, exhausted, shivering, with every limb benumbed, he almost despaired of eluding capture. But this was only the feeling of an instant. Rallying, he sprang up the bank, regardless of the sharp flints that tore and lacerated his feet; and was hurrying on, when he stepped into a ditch, brimming with foul, stagnant water, and sank to his neck. With difficulty he scrambled out, and started forward, often floundering ankle-deep in the mire, but, with

inflexible perseverance, pushing over every obstacle, ditch, drain, and fence, and ultimately reaching the road. It was long before he ventured to look behind, but the mist rising from the marshes, joined to the prevailing darkness, had effectually screened him from his pursuers, and he now paused to recover breath.

Where could he look for a refuge? Without clothes he could not enter a town, and he was already in sight of habitations! For a while he stood bewildered, utterly unable to decide how he could proceed; but at the moment that all hope seemed gone, fortune came to his aid. In a garden before him he descried a stuffed figure, set up as a scarecrow, and immediately comprehended how desirable it would be, in the absence of any better expedient, to array his shivering limbs in its habiliments, which was no sooner imagined

than done; and rendered more confident, as well as more comfortable, by the acquisition, he resumed his progress in better spirits. He now wanted only one thing more—money, or what, on arriving at a suitable place, could be converted into that requisite. Had any defenceless passenger passed, he probably would not have been long without these supplies; and more than once he cast an anxious glance around, hoping for such a contingency; but fortunately was disappointed.

While pondering on a remedy, his eye was attracted by an open gate, leading to a small villa; and, as it seemed a providential circumstance, he glided in, thinking the premises might repay inspection. He reached the back entrance, and noiselessly raised the latch. It yielded, and he entered.

The door of an inner room was unclosed, giving egress to a stream of light; and voices, which sounded strangely familiar to the in-

truder, were in vehement converse within. As he listened, there was a scream, followed by a heavy fall; and he involuntarily drew back. But, quick as thought, he came in again; and, with a light but rapid step, advanced to the room. Peering cautiously in, he saw the lifeless body of a woman stretched on the floor, and the murderer, as his looks too clearly denoted him, bending over it. It was Belwood, who now looked up, discovering Black Jem.

CHAPTER XXI.

At first Belwood was chained to the spot: then, uttering a fearful exclamation, he sprang forward as if to attack the intruder.

"Come, come, squoire, no gammon," cried Black Jem, starting aside. "If you comes on a step furder, I'll drop into 'ee."

"Who the devil are you? Where have you come from?" demanded Belwood, in a voice choking with contending passions.

"Yo' don't know I, then?" answered Black Jem. And he entered the room. "Yo'

don't know I, Squoire Belwood? Well, I be a bit altered, I suppose, but I b'lieved as yo'd ha' moinded Black Jem, as were a doggie ance, down in thoy cussed old pit. *She'd* ha' know'd me, I doubt." He pointed at the dead body, while his eyes, rivetted on those of Belwood, flashed with exultation. "Ay, she'd ha' known me, but yo' airn't gie'd her the chance. I never zee a cleaner job all my born days."

"I know you now," returned Belwood. "Say what will secure your secrecy, and you shall have it."

"Well, that be sayin' fair enow, onyways. It's what I calls speakin' oop, and coomin' to the pint. Yo' was always a good hand at that, squoire, nobody can't denoy; and considerin'——"

"Enough! only say what you want."

"Arx your own conscience, then, squoire,

if so be as it bain't wore into a reddle. Look at my toggery, and that's borrowed of a bird-fancier, and then coom to a fair reck'nin'. Only behave like a gen'lman, and I'se mum."

"Take this hundred pounds," said Belwood, drawing a note from his pocket-book. "Come to me to-morrow night, at Morley's Hotel, and you shall have what more you require. I stipulate for only one condition—you must quit Europe."

"If I doan't, they'll soon sarve me wi' notice," replied Black Jem, with a leer. "Howsever, yo's acted jonnick, squoire, and I won't wait for that. But I be 'mazin' dry. Now our hash is settled, I'd loike to see what 'ee's got to drink."

"There is no time for that. We must leave the house directly, and you should make the best of your way to town."

"Not a bit on't. I'se had enough racin'

for one night's work, and won't budge a step furder. So out wi' the lush, squoire, and don't 'ee spile a good borgain."

Belwood saw it would be useless to oppose him, and opening a cheffonier, produced a bottle of spirits, which Jem eagerly seized.

"Now for a glim, squoire," he said. "I must go into t'other room; for I can't bide here, while *her*, as were just now quite hearty, be lookin' on, dead. Stroike me bloind, when I looks at her, I don't know how 'ee could do it, squoire—stashed if I do!"

Furnished with a light, he retired to the opposite parlour, leaving Belwood alone with the corpse.

The murderer sat down, excited almost to madness. His brain, haunted by so many terrors, each compromising life, seemed on fire; and his temples throbbed as if they would burst. Each step had carried him

further and further into guilt, nearer and nearer to destruction. What would he not have given now, when too late, to have refrained from his revolting crime—to have incurred the open and lasting infamy of a felon, all the penalties and the odium of his previous great offences, rather than the concealed fears, the unknown pangs, that now tormented him! But this was the sum and extent of his remorse. His repentance was for himself: no pity, no qualm of conscience, no tender visiting of nature, was awakened for his victim.

Circumstances he had not thought of before, now, viewed by his quickened apprehension, seemed to tell so forcibly and decidedly against him, to make him so clearly an object of distrust, that he wondered how he could possibly have overlooked them. Should it transpire that Helen was his wife

—and it was even now evident that some one possessed the secret—then, beyond all doubt, her opportune death by violence must inevitably fix suspicion on him, more especially when he was so interested in bringing about that event. In any case, his connexion with her might be traced, and this, in the critical position he occupied, must lead to a complete discovery. A more terrible reflection remained—his life, embittered and blasted by these fears, was at the mercy of a vile ruffian, who, in some drunken debauch, or to shield himself from any risk of punishment, might at any time yield him up to justice.

But why linger in a spot so fatal to safety? Unfortunately for his design, he had no alternative. Black Jem, whose apprehension was as much to be dreaded as his own, could not be left behind, and he refused to depart before morning, turning a deaf ear to both threats

and entreaties. All he could do, therefore, was to pass the interval in creating the appearance of a burglary, which, when the tragic event should come to light, would serve the purpose of misleading the police.

Morning came at last; and having, by an hour's sleep, retrieved himself from the effects of his brutal potations, Black Jem now consented to go. To avert any observation, it was arranged that he should leave first, and proceed to town on foot, while Belwood, who was not likely to attract notice, went forward by the railway; and this was accordingly done.

Soon afterwards, Doctor Thornhill, who had come up express on receiving Millicent's letter, apprising him of Helen's situation, made his appearance at the gate; and after a moment's hesitation, as if to make sure it was

the right house, entered. He repeatedly pulled the bell, but receiving no answer, went round the house to reconnoitre, when, like Black Jem, he found the back door open. It had been purposely left so by the convict, who, with the reckless daring of his class, determined to return, as soon as Belwood should be well on his way, and secure what movables he could lay hands on. As, with this view, he was now approaching the door, he encountered the Doctor coming out, aghast at the horrid spectacle he had discovered; and without waiting to be questioned, he made off. At once assured he was concerned in the murder, the Doctor flew after him, shouting at the top of his voice, and two men who were passing the gate, and heard the alarm, pounced upon him.

"Hold off!" he cried, losing all presence of

mind in the surprise. "It warn't I, though I knows the man as done it. Only give me breath, and I'll tell 'ee who it were."

Belwood, little dreaming of such a disaster, was now safely bestowed in the train, flying along the railway towards town. With all the sore burden on his mind inseparable from the commission of a great crime, even in the most callous, he had begun to recover spirits, and to look on his situation more hopefully. True, an occasional pang rose in his breast, fears and misgivings still lingered about him; but a sense of freedom, the fresh, bracing air, and, more than all, the absence of the fearful testimony to his guilt, recalled his inflexibility, and his decision of purpose. Like the leviathan machine which dragged him so swiftly along, he had a fire at his heart—a devouring insatiable furnace, but it made no impression on his iron nerves. Soon

he would reach his luxurious home; and he was already devising new schemes of pleasure, of gratification, of triumph. Miserable man! swiftly as he flew along, intelligence of his heinous crime was borne before him on lightning wings. Invisible, unsuspected, the mighty telegraph was at work, and almost as its soundless chords were touched, its mission was accomplished. The dark tragedy, which he himself had almost ceased to think of, was no longer a secret: every fact was registered:—

"A lady has just been murdered at Stratford. The murderer, who is her husband, is about five feet ten inches high, has a very pale complexion, dark eyes, thick eyebrows, Roman nose, brown hair, and whiskers of the same colour. He wears a slouched travelling cap, with the peak pulled over his eyes; a blue scarf tied round his mouth; a loose pilot coat; and black trousers. He is about thirty years of age. He has taken a first class ticket, by the up-train; and is in the fifth carriage from the engine."

"One—three—five," murmured a police-

man, in plain clothes, as the train arrived at the terminus-platform. "Here we are."—And as Belwood alighted, he planted himself before him. "I beg your pardon, sir. I wish to have one word with you, if you please."

"With me!" replied Belwood, slightly agitated. "It must be a mistake."

"No mistake, sir, I'm sure. Just step this way, sir, if you'll be so good."

"Oh, certainly."—And he accompanied him to a little room.

"You are now my prisoner, sir," the policeman then said. "I charge you with the murder of your wife, some time this morning, or last night, at Stratford-le-Bow."

Belwood was paralysed.

"Here, come and take hold, mate, and shove him in the cab," said the policeman to a brother-constable, who, with a grimace of satisfaction, flew to obey.

Belwood was scarcely conscious till he found himself the inmate of a cell, at a neighbouring police-station. Here, as the turnkey informed him, he was to remain till the witnesses arrived from Stratford, when he would be taken before a magistrate, and undergo an examination. But his sentence was already pronounced, and the inexorable judge who uttered it, in a tone precluding appeal, was his own heart. When the cell was again visited, he was found suspended from a bar of the window by his cravat. They cut him down, but could secure only his dead body: his soul had escaped!

CHAPTER XXII.

Millicent was returning from a morning promenade, in the enclosure of Belgrave Square, and in which none of the Judge's family were of sufficiently early habits to accompany her, when, on entering the hall, the servant announced that a gentleman was waiting to see her, at the same time presenting the stranger's card.

"I will see him directly," replied Millicent. And the laquey conducted her to the room.

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The Doctor tried to speak, but could not.

"Do not despair, dear sir," said Millicent. "It is yet possible to rescue her from misery."

"No, no!" replied the Doctor, mournfully. "Had I but known in time where she was living, it might have been done, but now all is lost. Oh! my young friend, I have shocking, fearful intelligence to communicate—such, indeed, as I know not how to break to you, but it is more disastrous than anything you can imagine."

"What has occurred, then? But have you heard anything since I wrote to you? You have not, I presume, seen Helen?"

"Would that I had not!—for the spectacle, coming upon me so unexpectedly, has, I fear, shaken my reason."

Millicent involuntarily shuddered: a dreadful apprehension had seized upon her.

"What can have happened?" she exclaimed. "Oh! speak, sir, for your silence terrifies me."

"Helen is dead," said the Doctor, in a choking voice.

"Then, she has been murdered!"

"Most cruelly."

"And her murderer is——"

"Dead, too. Charles Belwood has committed suicide."

"Unhappy man!" said Millicent, in mingled consternation and grief.

"It is horrible!" cried Doctor Thornhill. "Had you, like me, known him from his childhood, when I have carried him in my arms, and joined in his innocent gambols—had you been the friend of his father, of his

mother, and the friend, the lover, of *her* mother, cherishing in her what was a memorial of the fond and only dream of my youth—had you been this, young lady, you might conceive how their fate has appalled and harrowed me! But no one can feel it—no, none; and I am left in the world without consolation."

"But not without sympathy, Sir. Every one who can appreciate goodness and worth, such as you have always displayed, will sympathise and condole with you. In this house, at least, you will, I am sure, find warm and sincere friends, who will do their utmost to cheer you. You must allow me to make you acquainted with Sir Charles Webster."—And she placed her hand on the bell.

"Not this morning—no, I am not equal to it. I must go and take some rest; but I will

call on you again in a few days, if you will permit me."

"I shall consider it an obligation. May I tell Sir Charles where you are staying?"

"You are very good. Farrance's is close by, and I shall go there. I must return home as soon as the bodies are interred."—And with these words, he took leave.

Millicent was at the time too prostrated by the intelligence he had brought, to undertake with the requisite firmness the task of disclosing it to her friends; and she retired to her chamber, where she could indulge the sorrow it was impossible to dissipate. How auspicious her own destiny now appeared, even with all its adversities and vicissitudes, when matched with that of Helen, who, born in a situation so incomparably superior, and possessing every advantage of person and fortune, had yet perished so

miserably. But this grateful reflection did not mitigate the anguish she felt at her fate. They had been connected by a tie of no common character, maintained steadily through years of trial. And to know what Helen's nature had been—so gentle, so meek, so loving; to know that its precious affections had been mangled and rent, and thrown to the winds; to know, in short, what had been her life, and now see her end, was most truly grievous and disheartening. But other thoughts came to the mourner's relief, and she regained a degree of composure.

Her dejection and horror were shared by all, as soon as the deplorable incidents became known. Sir Charles, whose sympathies were ever enlisted for the afflicted and the unfortunate, went in the course of the day to visit Doctor Thornhill, and by sincere and earnest condolence, greatly alleviated his dis-

tress. The Doctor, however, declined for the time an invitation to Belgrave Square, being resolved not to enter into company till after the inquest and funeral.

It was not till the evening following the latter event that he joined the Judge's dinner circle. Several other strangers had been invited; and though, on his arrival, he was still oppressed with gloom, cheerful discourse soon took effect on his spirits. Millicent saw the change with satisfaction, but while at dinner had no opportunity of conversing

projects, and it was only by an effort that she could join, with but small appearance of interest, in the flood of gossip that followed. Directly the gentlemen came in, she glided away to a table, where, while ostensibly occupied with a portfolio of Hollars, she could muse uninterrupted, and, indeed, was not without an expectation that the Doctor would join her. Soon some one approached, but looking up, she found it was Lord Childars.

Whether from surprise, or some other feeling, the discovery brought a perceptible addition of colour to Millicent's cheek, for a moment quite disconcerting the young nobleman.

"It is long since I had the happiness of meeting you," he said, in an embarrassed tone; "and now I have scarcely been able to say a word to you all the evening. I am

afraid you have found us all very dull, that you are obliged to resort to Hollars."

"The dulness is entirely my own," replied Millicent, with a faint smile. "To say truth, I cannot keep my thoughts from other things."

"So long as they do not stray to other persons, we have no right to complain. Indeed, I have contracted such a habit of wandering myself, that I should be throwing stones from a glass house. But my thoughts always turn to the same point."—And he bent a glance of mournful tenderness on her face.

"And that is Italy, perhaps," she said, though dropping her eyes. "I hear you have been there since I last saw you."

"Yes, but I was not thinking of Italy. Even when there, all my hopes were in England."

"There her children's hearts must always be, but still I can imagine those soft and wondrous scenes must have a siren's influence over one, when we move through them, that for the time scarcely leaves power to remember England. At best, she must greatly suffer by comparison."

"It was not so in my case. In the midst of the noblest prospects of Italy — in Petrarch's valley, and under Tasso's oak—in the Piazza of Saint Mark, and in the Bay of Naples, my eye was longing after our own plain fields."

"Yet, perhaps, after all, it was not our plain fields, but the people who walk in them, that appeared so charming," said Fanny, who came up while he was speaking.

"And suppose I admit it?" answered Lord Childars. But, to his great chagrin, Millicent was now addressed by Doctor

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without obligation to any one. It is because she is poor that she would deem herself degraded by contracting a wealthy marriage."

"And a creature so noble I am to lose—to leave to her unhappy destiny, which mars and blights mine. So it must be, since she wills it; but I may at least have the consolation of seeing her unexceptionably provided for. I charge myself with that duty, and you, I am sure, will not betray my part in it."

"Most certainly not, but I am afraid her fate is already decided. Lady Gresham tells us that a companion is wanted for Miss Clinton; and our only hope is, that the circumstance of her having been connected with that wretched man Belwood, will deter Millicent from engaging with her. But I have declined to have anything to say in the matter myself; and she is to be told of it by Dr. Thornhill."

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favour."

"You are too thou
replied Millicent. "
situation is in some
me, but the feeling
one, and I hope and
off."

yourself to what is disagreeable. Wait a little, and something more eligible will offer."

"I am sincerely grateful for the interest you take in me; but I really cannot hope, when so many are seeking these employments, to obtain everything that my kind friends could wish, and my mind has long been made up to embrace the first opening that presents itself. Judge, then, dear sir, if I can hesitate now."

"Then you authorise me to accept Lady Gresham's good offices in the matter?"

"Assuredly. Shall we go and speak to her together?"

The Doctor assented, and they moved off to the good-natured chaperon.

CHAPTER XXIII.

EVERY woman's heart has its romance, its little episode of secret or avowed love, be it in other respects what it may. When insensible to everything else, there is one magnetic name sweeps its chords with softest harmony. When it seems only a void and sterile waste, one ray of passion reveals a soil deep and rich, and soon blushing with fruitfulness. And in the dreariest season of age, in the darkest hour of fortune, when blighted, desolate, and it may be deadened, one divine

remembrance still lingers there, flickering in the socket, and will only expire with life.

It would never be imagined that such impressions and such sympathies could influence Harriet Clinton—that with her weak, frivolous character, and almost imbecile mind, she should possess feelings of unknown depth, and heroic intensity. But this was the cold and impassive statue, animated by the Promethean fire. Cimon had been transformed; and Harriet became inspired.

New qualities, new affections, new and strange capabilities, of which she had previously had no idea, rose in her bosom involuntarily, unconsciously, overruling her wilfulness, subduing her impetuosity, giving breadth and aim to her imagination. Her mind ceased to dwell on mean and petty jealousies, and small domestic intrigues, and, in their place, cherished the tender anxieties,

the keen sensibility, the devotion of love. It travelled out of the narrow circle of home into the strong, sturdy ambitions of life. It shook off its lethargy. Striving always to show its little lustre, it developed by the effort energies long dormant, but fresh and healthful. Another being was aroused within her. And to one at least she became meek and obedient, acquiring with her new vocation the guidance of a principle, which taught her grave lessons of patience, resignation, and fortitude.

But her brief dream was at an end. A spring had snapped, and the beautiful and intricate mechanism, which had seemed to work so gracefully, and so well, became immovable and useless. Again a cloud gathered over her mind, dense and gloomy, obscuring every sense. Horrified at her lover's fate, and more by his crimes, her soul retreated

to its inmost recesses, stricken down and blighted, without even an impression of what had occurred. She was an idiot!

It soon became known that Mrs. Clinton had determined to provide the unhappy young lady with a companion, whose duties, however, would be more those of a *gouvernante*, or guardian, and, as may be supposed, it was not long before an applicant for the situation appeared.

"Mrs. Jacihtha Smith," said a servant, ushering into Mrs. Clinton's presence a lady who had sent up her card, requesting an interview.

In the sharp, perked features, and sunken figure of the visitor, few would have recognised the once blooming and gay Jacintha Jumpsen—yet she it was.

"I understand, madam," she said, in her blandest tones, "you wish to engage a lady—

an experienced, properly qualified person, a
a companion to your daughter; and I tak
the liberty to make you a tender of my ser
vices. Unexceptionable references as t
character, ability, &c. Salary not so muc
an object as a comfortable home,"—spoke
with an insinuating smile.

"May I ask who told you I wanted an
one?" replied Mrs. Clinton in her highe
manner—feeling like a Premier with a vacan
Bishopric.

Mrs. Jacintha not choosing to own a
acquaintance with the lady's-maid, to whon
she was indebted for the information, was
little disconcerted.

" I heard of it quite accidentally, madam
she said, evasively. " I flatter myself, if w
come to an understanding, you will find m
every way competent. I may state, that
was formerly directress, and, indeed, par

proprietor of a large school in the country, where I enjoyed facilities of acquiring a thorough knowledge of the female character. This, madam——"

"Is a great advantage, no doubt," said Mrs. Clinton, tartly interrupting her; "but——"

"Not what you look for, madam," cried Mrs. Jacintha. "Perhaps not, madam; but it is valuable experience, which, at least, carries some recommendation. I am sure, at the time I allude to, I had little idea that I should ever be driven by circumstances to seek employment. I was then independent, madam—happy, had I but thought so; but, unfortunately for my peace, I loved."

Mrs. Clinton smiled derisively.

"It was my destiny to meet Mr. Bellisarius Smith—a person of the most captivating appearance, the most charming address, the

most insinuating manners. I saw my danger, and fearful of yielding to persuasion but too alluring, shunned him. In vain. He had set his heart on me, madam, and on my fortune; and, in an evil hour, I gave him both. It will sound to you like a romance, madam—like an over-wrought melodrama. You will not believe that this fascinating individual—my Bellisarius, as I believed him—you will not, I am sure, believe that, after I had thus devoted myself to him, he

Mrs. Jacintha looked thunderstruck.

"Indeed, madam, I had no idea—" she said, becoming red and white, by turns. "I—I am very sorry that——"

"I must really bid you good morning, Mrs. Smith."

"I will not detain you one moment, madam, but this intelligence, so different from what I was led to expect, has taken me quite by surprise—has seriously disappointed me. May I, therefore, hope you will excuse me, when I beg you will tell me the name of the successful candidate?"

Mrs. Clinton opened her eyes with a look of astonishment.

"It is a most strange request," she said, after a pause. "However, there is nothing to conceal in it. The young person's name is Rennel."

Mrs. Jacintha had half turned towards the

door, intending, as she withdrew, to wreak her vengeance by a biting allusion to Miss Clinton's ill-fated marriage, the particulars of which were only too well known; but this announcement gave a new direction to her thoughts.

"Rennel!" she murmured. "Rennel! I know that name somewhere. Yes, yes, I remember now. But it can't be Millicent Rennel."

"Miss Rennel!" cried a servant, throwing open the door.

Millicent, as she came forward, was somewhat startled to behold Mrs. Jacintha, and bent coldly. Mrs. Jacintha drew herself up.

"Well, I am sure, madam!" she cried. "I did not expect you would have the presumption to bow to me."

"Do you know this person, Miss Rennel?" asked Mrs. Clinton, surprised.

"Yes, madam," returned Millicent, with modest dignity. "She was formerly at the head of a school, where I was a pupil."

"And from which you were ignominiously expelled," screamed Mrs. Jacintha.

"Can this be true, Miss Rennel?"

"It is a most wilful perversion of what occurred, madam," answered Millicent, indignantly.

"Then something of the kind really did occur?"

"She cannot deny it," struck in Jacintha; "no, brazen and artful as she is, she dare not contradict me. Nor," added the malignant preceptress, determined to prevent Millicent from being engaged, "dare she deny that it was for an offence of the most disgraceful kind—a clandestine meeting at night with a gentleman, outside the school-gate."

"Impossible!" cried Mrs. Clinton, yet, with the malice of a vulgar mind, delighted to see Millicent humbled.

"It is wholly untrue, madam," said Millicent. "This person did indeed bring such an accusation against me at the time, but it was, as she knows, most fully disproved. Fortunately all that occurred is known to Mrs. Harper, and she is ready to exonerate me from every shadow of blame."

"You will forgive me for saying I must be satisfied that such is the case before I can consent to intrust you with the care of Miss Clinton," said the stepmother, with great majesty.

"Mrs. Harper shall fully satisfy you, madam," answered Millicent. "I will request her to do so, as a point of duty I owe to myself, though, to prevent any misconstruction,

I beg to say that I must now relinquish the idea of offering you my services."

And before any reply could be made, she withdrew.

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was with burning brow, and bosom swelling with resentment, such as even her gentle and enduring spirit could not quell, that Millicent quitted Mrs. Clinton's house, impatient to report what had occurred to Fanny. Never had the yoke of dependance seemed so galling, so heavy—never, under all the slights and mortifications she had experienced, in a life of peculiar trial, had she felt so painfully humbled. Now she was

wounded in the tenderest and most sensitive point, her good name! Anything else she could have borne, as one of the thousand ills poverty is heir to; but only a nature void of self-respect, the inseparable companion of virtue, can be indifferent to a stigma. Such was not hers! Her heart would bleed till she was vindicated!

On reaching Sir Charles's door, a gentleman who was waiting for admission turned round, and raised his hat. It was the Reverend Martin Alderson.

"My dear Miss Rennel, how do you do?" he said, with an air of great cordiality.

Millicent, though his altered demeanour might have excited surprise, and though cherishing a resentful recollection of their last meeting, accepted his proffered hand, endeavouring vainly to disguise her agitation.

"I heard by accident you were here," he

resumed, "and have come to town expressly to see you, being charged with a very important communication. I may add I am deeply sorry to find you in affliction, as you too clearly appear to be."

"You are very kind, sir," replied Millicent, in a voice she could scarcely command. "It is something that requires my immediate attention; so that I must ask you to excuse me this morning—unless, indeed, your communication cannot be deferred."

"I should be grieved to distress you, but the fact is, every moment is of consequence. Still, I can, of course, await your leisure."

"I thank you, Sir. I shall not detain you long."—And entering the house, she led the way to a drawing-room.

"I see you are very much discomposed, my dear young friend," said Mr. Alderson,

paternally, as she was leaving him; "and what I have to say is not of a tranquillising nature. I have a letter here, however, that will prepare you for it. Take it with you, and read it while you are alone."

Millicent received the letter, though so pre-occupied she scarcely thought of what she was doing; and then hastened to impart her distress to Fanny. She found the young wife in her boudoir, but the emotion with so much difficulty repressed, while exposed to observation, now mastered her, and unable to speak, she burst into tears.

"My dear Milly! what is this? What has happened?" cried Fanny, much alarmed and throwing her arm round her.

It was not so easy for Millicent to reply; but, at length, she described what had occurred at Mrs. Clinton's.

"It is most abominable," angrily exclaimed

Fanny, as she concluded. "And to think that vindictive woman, after persecuting you so at school, should still retain her ill-feeling towards you—even seek to throw an aspersion on your character! But do not let it grieve you, dear. I can establish your innocence, and I will."

"But I have been thinking, as you were not at school at the time, Fanny, Mrs. Clinton will attach little weight to your testimony," said Millicent, despondingly. "You can tell her only what you have heard from me."

"I shall tell her nothing; but Mrs. Dobbs, who at least knows as much of you as her sister, and is far more entitled to credit, shall go to Mrs. Clinton with me, and state what really took place."

"Oh! thank you, thank you! That is just what I wish—what I intended to ask of

you. And forgive my impatience, Fanny; but, in truth, I shall be unhappy till I am vindicated."

"Then, that shall be for a very short time, dear Milly," said Fanny, kissing her; "for I will go about it immediately—this instant."

"I knew you would!" exclaimed Millicent, in a voice full of feeling. "My Fanny will stand by me, and befriend me, even if I should be deserted by all the world."

"Which you are not likely to be, as you have a whole host of friends: so pray drive those envious clouds from your little face. But what letter have you got there, with that large black seal, enough to make one scream? No bad news, I hope?"

"It cannot be, I should think, but I had quite forgotten it. It was given me by Mr. Alderson, a clergyman, whom I knew at

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and see what he ha

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cannot collect my
indeed."

"Oh, if that is a
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"I should like to
that letter, too!"
petulance—"not th
but—well, well, I
gaily, and glided ou

length her eye fell on the letter; the black seal, with its strange massive blazonry, which had made such an impression on Fanny, did really seem significant; and now recalled her attention. Tearing it open, she ran hastily over the contents.

"Miss Rennel,"—so the missive began—"On receipt hereof, you will, by my death, become possessed of all the property which devolved on me as heir-at-law of the late Mrs. Grantley.

"My reasons for making such a bequest are threefold; and it is, perhaps, proper, under the circumstances, that they should be fully explained to you.

"First, then, I am of opinion, on consideration, that it would be extremely derogatory to my family to appropriate this ac-

quisition, derived from a person who degraded herself by a disreputable alliance, and with whom we constantly repudiated all connexion.

"Secondly, it appears that it was the intention of the deceased, in her last moments, to leave the whole of her effects to you, and that such a result was only frustrated by an accident. When her design was first mentioned to me, I thought the mere unsupported assertion of it of little importance; but I find that there is sufficient evidence of the fact to justify you, should your claim be disputed, in instituting a suit in Chancery; and no doubt remains on my mind that you are entitled to succeed to the property.

"Thirdly, I am more readily led to these conclusions from the circumstance of your having refused, on a late occasion, to meet

any overtures from my son, who, I need not repeat to you, can only marry with honour in his own rank of life, and in a family of irreproachable descent.

"You now know what has actuated me in the arrangement I have made, and which my death will render irrevocable.

"HILDRED VAVASOUR."

Millicent drew a deep breath when she came to the end. Then, penetrated by the unsearchable goodness of Providence, she sank on her knee, and buried her face in her hands.

Her adoration, her deep, pious, fervent thankfulness, did not take the form of words; for it was unconscious—an impulse of the soul, which speech could not express. It poured itself forth in a flood of confused, but earnest and throbbing thoughts, rising spon-

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would still watch
as in adversity, ke

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stubborn pride of i
his character in
light. It must not
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was written caused
did not perceive, w
quickened by a rec
endured, the arroga
in every line. But
fact, so subversive o

perpetual right? It is true, her cheek glowed for a moment with indignation, natural in a heart stored with generous sympathies, at the exhibition of such bitter and vindictive animosity against Mrs. Grantley, to her so inestimably dear; but the reflection that the infirm character which dictated it, and kept better qualities in subjection, had been arraigned before that Tribunal where all offences must be answered—the Judge from whose sentence there is no appeal—speedily awoke other emotions, and brought her to regard it with pity and forbearance. Spite his prejudices, too, she saw in his hard nature a stern, inflexible sense of honour, almost covering its deformity; and to which, indeed, she owed the recognition of Mrs. Grantley's maternal intentions towards herself, thus restoring her lost inheritance.

The allusion to the addresses of Vavasour, so long banished from remembrance as a thing to be abhorred, mantled her face with a flush deep and burning; but it quickly subsided, and a train of brighter recollections arose, kindling softer feelings. There was even a gleam of triumph in her eye, as, rising suddenly, it flashed with strange lustre, like sunshine on a still lake, lighting up its depths. Perhaps, she recalled another, as noble in descent, nobler in the world's estimation, who did not scorn her so.

From these thoughts she hastened to rejoin Mr. Alderson, who, however, now that she was so largely gifted with fortune, could wait very patiently for her leisure.

"I presume I need no longer deny myself the pleasure of offering you my congratulations, Miss Rennel," he said, advancing to meet her,

and again shaking her hand, with the most engaging affability. " You have read Sir Hildred's letter ?"

"Yes," replied Millicent, much moved. " I conclude from it that he is—dead." She hesitated over the last word; for whatever might be her feelings towards Sir Hildred, it seemed to accord little with the language of congratulation.

" He is indeed gone," sighed Mr. Alderson. "My poor friend, Miss Rennel, found his ancient name, which he was so proud of, of little avail against the shaft of Death. The great destroyer swallows up all."

He paused an instant, looking Solomon.

" I ought to tell you," he then continued, " that my friend"—it was pleasant to call the dead man, so imperious and so exclusive, by that familiar name—" appointed me in his

me what I am e:
scarcely say I am in
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traordinary bequest
surprise. But Sir
am sure, gladly do
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"His advice wil
replied Mr. Alders
adoration of person
are most fortunate i
sellor, one of the m
on the bench, and, f
less estimable in pri

Millicent slightly

glad to place myself wholly under his guardianship."

"You will act wisely. But you have not asked me any questions as to the amount of your property."

"No; for whatever it may be, I am quite sure it is more than I desire."

"You must permit me to remark, though, it is not more than you deserve. You owe your good fortune, under Providence, entirely to your own exemplary conduct, which has won the esteem of all who have the happiness to be acquainted with you. I am afraid I distress you, but I cannot deny myself the satisfaction of paying a humble tribute to your singular worth. To return to business, I believe I am within the mark when I say your income will be at least three thousand a year."

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diately put in posse

"I think I may
shall receive his
fortunately he is e
Westminster Hall,
him at once; but
as he comes home,
will write to you di

"I shall be mos
commands," replied
saying, he took leav

Millicent hastene
her own room. A
strange and unexpe

of thoughts, she strove in vain to compose herself. Her meditation was interrupted, at last, by the return of Fanny.

"I have such news for you," cried Fanny, hurrying in, her face flushed and excited. "But what is the matter, Milly?—what miracle has happened? It is scarcely one hour since I left you a daughter of Niobe, and here I find you as blithe as a butterfly."

"I have had a spell cast upon me," replied Millicent. "Read this."

Fanny eagerly ran her eye over Sir Hildred's letter, uttering exclamations as she proceeded, and then, in an irrepressible outburst of joy, began to dance round Millicent, waving the momentous despatch overhead.

"I am so glad! I am so glad!" she exclaimed, rapturously. "My Milly will be happy, after all."

command yourself, a
reasonable. I thougl
to tell me?"

"Ah! so I have, b
drove it out out of my
Mrs. Dobbs."

"Well, what of he
she go with you to M

"No, but she gav
completely exculpating
the spiteful woman
will be sorry enough v
good fortune, be assu
what has vexed me, fo
immaterial, when you

Mrs. Clinton may think, or pretend to think about you. But you will never guess what I have to tell. The Dobbses have turned Roman Catholics."

"That does not surprise me at all. I expected nothing else."

"Oh! I would not have had it happen for the world! Oswald will teaze me to death about it."

"Hilloa, Mrs. Pusey!" cried Oswald, at this moment entering, "I have some intelligence for you—tidings! tidings!"

"I don't want to hear them," screamed Fanny, stopping her ears.

"But it's about your prophet—your Mormon, Firebrass Dobbs."

"I don't want to know anything about him."

"But he's turned Roman Catholic," persisted Oswald, "and Mrs. Dobbs, and the

off, laughing boiste

Such is the impr

defections!

CHAPTER XXV.

A GAY company was assembled in Sir Charles Webster's drawing-room, listening with eager attention to an impassioned air from the new opera, which a lovely girl, seated at the magnificent and deep-toned piano, executed with admirable effect. It was one of those soft, melting melodies that touch the most obdurate, awaking in the heart a voluptuous sensibility, a dreamy impression of pleasure, such as few can find power to resist. Then it is, indeed, that

by music, sat a listl
formance, his eyes tu
floor; and, in truth,
were elsewhere, ench
ing spell.

"May I ask if the
at Coventry, Lord Cl
voice beside him, as t

"You think I ough
person unfit for good
the nobleman, with a
covered who was the

"Oh! you might
Lady Godiva," return

"If you know who engaged my thoughts, you should tell me something about her," he said. "How is it she has disappeared?"

"Why, you know she is quite a person of business now, and always has something most important to do, at the very time she should be amusing herself. You have heard, of course, that she leaves us to-morrow morning for Winstone Manor?"

"So soon?"

"Yes, by the 11.45 train."

"You are as precise as Bradshaw, and know the time to an instant. Would that I could look forward to it with—I will not say the same calmness, but the same hope, as you do! But you lose her only for a season—I, for ever."

"And why for ever? You always speak in this desponding way now, as if you were

to some out-of-th

Greece."

"Or Sierra Leon

desperately.

"Sierra Leone!

what can you be thi

you possibly do at S

"Bury myself."

"Bury yourself, in

clare I will go and te

Lord Childars foll

off, but it was not t

ante-room, they rea

library, that she to

presence.

"Tell her that she has driven me to despair?" he replied. "Yes!"

Fanny, without further hesitation, threw open the door, and they entered.

Millicent was seated at a table, with a sheet of paper spread before her, and a pen in her hand; but those delicate, taper fingers, instead of pursuing their task, were pressed on her drooping brow, and the letter she had commenced was forgotten. She started as her two friends appeared; and a rich, deep glow suffused her cheek, a message from her heart. But it was like a flash of lightning, gone as it appeared.

"Here is Lord Childars, Milly, come to bid you good-by," cried Fanny. "Where do you think he is going?"

"I cannot imagine," answered Millicent, trying to look bright. "Returning to Italy, perhaps?"

tent for that. He co

fens of Sierra Leone.

Millicent uttered

prise: then, as if fe

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and when, recoverin

had gone, leaving

Childars.

The despairing lo

word, and even whe

tinued silent; but a

feelings gave a burn

look. Millicent was

awkward stillness.

"When do you se

"For Sierra Leone."

"Do you wish me to go to Sierra Leone, then?"

"Oh, no! Perhaps I misunderstood, but I thought you intended to do so."

"I will go anywhere you please: it matters little where; for I carry in my mind what will make every place a desert, and life a burden."

"Unhappy! and yet, my lord, why should it be so?—I mean I am grieved—I am very sorry, this should be."

"How cold, how unmeaning, how empty are these words! Sorry! grieved! Oh! Millicent! can you say so when it is your voice, your inexorable lips, that the blight has come from?—the voice that is melody to every one else, the lips that were made only to bless! Do not repel me—do not,

will be to death—to de

Millicent made no a

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that gave them such sig

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Perhaps he saw, wi

mind; for his arm glided round her throbbing waist, and he clasped her trembling hand in both his own.

"You will be mine!—you ARE mine!" he exclaimed, rapturously. And though half turning away, she suffered him to seal his vow of eternal fidelity on her lips.

Rider.

IT is sometimes an objection to tales of adventure if they end with any abruptness, and so give but a dim glimpse of the happy future; and, therefore, it seemeth good to leave no ground for such complaint on this occasion, by stating fully and distinctly how pending matters matrimonial were settled.

tinguished guests, an
guests themselves, a
was. Of course, F. M
sent, though so engro
public business, that he
same day, to decline at
ing of the Marylebone
dars was congratulated
sides, notwithstanding
no one knew where,
lovely bride was of
had acquired her grea
But though these spit
welcomed and propaga

pledge for that of the bride. No long time had elapsed since two unworthy members of the peerage had yoked themselves with a jilted and decayed actress and a college bedmaker; and the days are gone past when virtue, however humble, could bring it disgrace.

It was some days previously that Mary Fielding was united in wedlock to bluff Will Kingston. The marriage concluded, they took up their abode at a very snug and respectable house "in the upholstery line," provided for them by Millicent, and where, under the patronage of Lady Childars, they are now doing a very smart business.

Tom Fielding is domiciled at Winstone Manor, at the porter's lodge, where he may often be found in the evening telling stories of "old Lord Gough" and other great India

Mr. John.

Black Jem
gone beyond s
folk Island, to
ported for life.

It only rem
news of Mr. M
so many ups an
verb that it is
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pletely undone i
rica, finally ma
where, wanderi
squatted on wha

it is only about a mile square, his neighbours, though at first disposed to dispute his right of possession, have left him to make what he can of it; and should he only be able to get it to some country where it will fetch the price of lead, there is a possibility that he may again become a very substantial man.

THE END.